

# Statement of Biblical Morality

We at Richview Church believe that the Bible is God's Word, and so is the authoritative guide to all of life both spiritually and morally. We believe all Christians, including our members and staff at Richview Church, will strive to live in a way that is consistent with the teachings of Scripture in his or her behaviour, attitudes, and relationships. We believe obedience to Scripture is both for our good and God's glory. This document seeks to clarify Richview Church's interpretation of Scripture on issues that need to be clarified in our place and time.

## What this statement is *not* for:

- To permit ungraciousness towards people who have differences in biblical understanding
- To create the definitive and final answer to each and every moral question
- To teach how we ought to respond to people who disagree or do not live by the statement
- To promote a culture of law-keeping without grace
- To promote a culture of shame rather than restoration
- To create an expectation of sinless perfection without forgiveness

## What this statement is for:

- To clarify the Bible's teaching on moral issues in a time of moral, religious, and Christian diversity
- To create transparency about Richview Church's beliefs to oncoming and existing members with the purpose of promoting unity and avoiding in-house division
- To clarify lifestyle expectations of members of Richview Church which honour God and protect the church's witness
- To allow for teaching and constructive dialogue about culturally controversial biblical issues

## Christian Ethics

Members of Richview Church will strive to overcome all patterns and behaviours that the Bible describes as sinful, including but not limited to: lying or deceit of any kind (Exodus 20:16; Ephesians 4:25), obscene language including the use of the Lord's name in vain (Exodus 20:7; Ephesians 5:4), pornography and sexual immorality (Ephesians 5:3-4), theft or fraud (Exodus 20:15; Ephesians 4:28), physical and verbal aggression or sexual harassment (Galatians 5:22-26; 1 Timothy 3:3), substance and drug abuse (Ephesians 5:13; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20), criminal activities (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-15), greed and covetousness (Exodus 20:17; Hebrews 13:5), and divisiveness among God's people (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Ephesians 4:3).

Rather, the Bible affirms that Christians are to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in their attitudes and actions (Galatians 5:22-23), walk in a manner worthy of their calling (Philippians 1:27), fellowship together in a loving, respectful unity (Ephesians 4:3), maintain a vibrant and effective testimony for God in the world (Matthew 5:13-16), pursue holiness in all aspects of their lives (Ephesians 5:8-10), submit to governing authorities (Romans 13:1) and generally to walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6).

## Marriage, Divorce, and Sexual Morality

The Bible teaches that sex was created by God to be practiced only within the context of marriage—which is a monogamous, lifetime union of one woman and one man—for the enrichment of the relationship between the spouses and the procreation of children (Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2:18-25; 1 Corinthians 7; Hebrews 13:4). Any other sexual union, either between unmarried individuals, or outside of one's marriage, or between two men or two women, or between a human being and an animal, or between family members, is sin (Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18; Matthew 5:27-32; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 5:1-2; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Ephesians 5:2-5; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4).

We further believe that divorce is a severe action against God's design for marriage and should never be pursued except on biblical grounds including committing adultery (Malachi 2:14–16; Matthew 5:32, 19:9) and desertion by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:12–15). In these cases, the victimized spouse may, after seeking spiritual counsel from God and pastoral mentors, seek a divorce. Remarriage to a new, faithful partner is to be affirmed only when the prior divorce was on biblical grounds (Matthew 5:32, 19:9; Mark 10:11).

## **The Sanctity of Life**

Because human beings are created by God in His image, human life is sacred and has intrinsic value (Genesis 1:26-27). Therefore, we are committed to the sanctity of the life of the unborn from conception, the protection of children from abuse and exploitation, provision to those who are homeless and hungry, the care of those who have mental and physical illnesses and those with disabilities, the protection of the elderly from neglect and abuse, the dignity of the dying, the rehabilitation of those who have addictions and have committed crimes, and, in general, the care of “the least of these” (Matthew 25:31-46).

In sum, all people are to be treated with respect and shown the love of Christ in practical and spiritual ways (Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 2:7,21-24; Exodus 4:11; Exodus 20:13; Job 1:21; Psalm 22:9-10; Psalm 71:6; Psalm 127:3; Psalm 139:13-16; Isaiah 45:9-11; Jeremiah 7:6; Mark 12:31; Romans 9:20-21).

## **Gender & Sex**

Scripture affirms that God made humankind male and female, both of whom were created equally in the image of God (Genesis 1:27, 5:2). The dichotomy of male-female, husband-wife, man-woman, son-daughter, father-mother, is everywhere affirmed in Scripture (for example, Luke 19:4-5, Titus 2:1-8). On this basis, we affirm that people born as biological males are men and people born as biological females are women. We honour God by living in accordance with His gift to us in creating us male and female.

## **Racial Equality**

We reject racial discrimination because Scripture teaches that all humans are made in the image of God and thus of great value (Genesis 1:26-27). God promised through Abraham to bless all people (Genesis 12:2-3) and this promise found fulfillment in the ultimate offspring of Abraham, Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16), who offered Himself as an atoning sacrifice to redeem people from “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9-10). This brought about reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles as a “new humanity” (Ephesians 2:15, 3:6), a redeemed “holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9), a universal church that prefigures the coming kingdom of God that will include “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language” (Revelation 7:9).

In submission to God's revealed will, we will treat all people with the dignity and respect due to all who are made in God's image. We must never despise or treat unjustly other persons because of their race, appearance, language, or dialect. Disciples of Christ must repent of all forms of racism to make the church a visible demonstration of God's love for all without favoritism.

## **Forgiveness and Restoration**

In those times when we fall short of the above standard, God forgives and restores those who repent of their sin (1 John 1:9). No sin will disqualify us from the forgiveness God offers us in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). We as a church family are to hold one another accountable in Christian love and spur one another to live in obedience and faithfulness to God's Word (Hebrews 10:23-24). We also seek to restore those who are living in patterns of sin to faithfulness to Christ by encouraging repentance and reconciliation (Galatians 6:1-2, Matthew 5:23-24). Unrepentant sin or complacency in sin, however, endangers our spiritual lives and may be cause for church discipline at the discretion of the Elders (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 6:9).