



ETHICS & RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

This last year marked the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. 500 years ago an Augustinian monk was willing to stand for the clarity of the gospel, regardless of what the world around him thought. He had the fear of God. And he taught us to stand, bound by conscience to the Word of God.

In that same allegiance to God's Word, your Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission aims to do the very same thing. That's why we, for example, stand and dissent from a watching world that would tell us that children are only valuable if they are "planned," against those who seek to use government funds to subsidize a wicked and predatory industry. More broadly, though, with every initiative and in all we do, we aim to connect the agenda of the kingdom of God to the cultures of local congregations for the sake of the mission of the gospel in the world.

The ERLC has been active, as always, serving our churches and speaking from them to the broader culture. But part of that responsibility this year has included investing a great deal of time and energy into churches to help them think through the sorts of issues that may not show up in newspapers or on television but are every bit as critical. As a result, one of the areas we have recognized and responded to with particular urgency are parents who are grappling with complex cultural issues at the dinner table with their children. Parents now wonder how to talk with children about their identities as boys or girls, with children who are called bigots because they believe in marriage and family the way Jesus defines them, or with children who seem powerless before the technological pull of screens, social media, and a weaponized pornography industry.

Like no time before, parents and pastors now must confront complex questions about what it even means to be human. This is why the ERLC has partnered with LifeWay to develop a first-of-its-kind parenting curriculum designed for churches and small groups and Sunday School. This new curriculum brings together some of the most gifted thinkers from across the country to address these issues. At the same time, we've invested in our future leaders—welcoming hundreds of pastors and seminary students to training academies and graduate courses designed to equip them to address these very same issues and others.

Beyond that, we have been active speaking a word of witness from our churches to the watching world. That's why, for example, we launched a national campaign designed to build support and send a signal to every lawmaker in Washington that Planned Parenthood should not receive a single cent of taxpayer money. It's why we have been active in courts, applying pressure to the Senate to consider the rights of the unborn and the vulnerable when confirming judicial nominees. It's why we have been vigilant in Congress, contending for unborn children, religious liberty, family stability, human dignity, and more. It's also why the ERLC has focused intensely on racial reconciliation and justice over the last several years and will continue to do so in the future. If we love the world, as Jesus does, we must lead the way in gospel clarity here.

In the year ahead, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission will continue to stand and to speak—thanks to the faithful and sacrificial giving of Southern Baptists through the Cooperative Program. Ethics and religious liberty aren't grounded in cultural winds or government decrees but in the truth of the gospel. In order to stand up for those things, we must know how to nail theses to the wall of the world around us, not merely in protest but as ambassadors of reconciliation. So, we will work to arm the next generation to apply the Bible to the world around us. We will equip them to stand anywhere in any culture, with joy, and give a defense, without fear.

For the Kingdom,

Russell Moore