



What We Believe



This document was developed to help you understand the position Save The Nations takes on various issues that are most common. We hope that this is helpful to you.

What We Believe About ...

THE BIBLE

The Bible says that without vision, "the people cast off restraint." To put it another way; people without vision will try anything - any idea, any means to any end. But at Save The Nations we have a vision that is clearly laid out in the Scriptures.

The Bible says: "***The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord just as the waters cover the sea.***" (Habakkuk 2:14) In Mark 16:15 Jesus said to his disciples: "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." Our mandate as a Church is to go into the entire world and preach the good news so that the Name of Jesus is made known to all nations. As we spread the wonderful news of Jesus Christ, with accompanying good deeds and works of faith His glory shall be made known!

The Bible (Holy Scripture) is the inspired, inerrant, infallible word of God to all people at all times. Human authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote it. As such it is the supreme source of truth and is a completely reliable revelation of God. The Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and doctrine.

If I need to know something about my car; if I need to know how to change something so it works, how to make it run better and smoother; if I need to know how to fill it up with fuel, I need to read the manual that came with it. Equally as a Christian I have a great manual for living a great life. If I need to know anything about my life, how to change what is not working, how to refuel how to get started and live better, the Bible is there to **instruct me in how to live.**

But the Bible is far more than just a manual for living: **it is the actual Word of God!** 2 Timothy 3:16 tells me that God inspired (breathed) it, and that it is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. Because of this it is of great benefit to read the Bible on a regular basis.

Joshua 1:8 tells us not to let it depart from our mouths (confess the truth openly) but to meditate (consider the truth thoughtfully) on it day and night so that we may be careful to do (consolidate the truth practically) everything that is written in it, then we will be prosperous and successful. - **Conquerors in life!**

The Bible is there to help us, to guide us, therefore, **get to grips with the Word of God.** Read about Jesus; read about the wonderful promises God has given to you; read about the Kingdom that is to come in all its fullness; read about the Church and read about the impending return of the King of Kings because Jesus promises to return again soon!

BAPTISM

In the Bible **baptism by immersion in water is commanded by God** as the second part of his great salvation plan for all his people (Acts 2:37-38). It is inextricably linked to repentance and faith, and ideally it should follow immediately after our confession of Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9). As with everything else, Jesus Christ is our example: he himself was baptised (Matthew 3:13-17). In doing so he established a pattern for all who follow him as his disciples. **Baptism clearly is only for believers** (Mark 16:15-16); there is no evidence at all in the Bible for the sprinkling of babies. Baptism is done by total immersion in water (John 3:23, Acts 8:38-39). The Greeks used the word **baptizo** to describe the dyeing of a garment by submerging it in water, or the drawing of water by dipping one vessel into another. *Its strongest meaning is to 'submerge' or 'plunge'.* Baptism is very much a biblical command for all Christians, it is

not an optional extra that we can decide to take or leave (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-39; 10:48).

What happens in Baptism?

Baptism is a funeral with a difference! It is just like a death and burial, but unlike a normal funeral there is also a resurrection! (Romans 6:3-9). Baptism involves a personal declaration of our repentance from sin and of faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior (Acts 2:38). It is the beginning of a new life of discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20). In baptism we surrender to Jesus as the Lord of our life. We are baptized 'in the name of', which literally means 'under the authority of'. Baptism is the challenge to us whether our claim to repentance and faith is genuine. It is the death and burial of our old life with all its sinful nature and is our resurrection to a brand new life (Romans 6:3-4, Acts 22:16). In baptism we are 'clothed with Christ' (Galatians 3:27). We are now able to live the risen life of Jesus Christ himself in the power of the Holy Spirit. In baptism we receive a good conscience towards God and the renewing of our minds (1Peter 3:20-21; 1Timothy 1:5, 19; Titus:1:1). We are also baptized into Christ's body on earth - the church (Acts 2:41, Galatians 3:27, 1Corinthians 12:13).

Our baptism not only has a '**vertical affect**' toward God; it also has a real '**horizontal affect**' towards all other Christians. We are not only baptized into Christ but also into his people, the church. This means that we are no longer to live sinful, selfish, independent lives. We are now part of a corporate body with all its privileges and responsibilities. **We now belong to a new family the people of God** (1Peter 2:9-10). Baptism means things will never be the same again for us; the old has gone and the new has come (2Corinthians 5:17).

To find out more about how and when STN does its baptisms, read our Baptism Info Packet on our website (www.savethenations.com) under Welcome Tab/Church Forms.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is **a vital, foundational experience for every Christian**. Jesus Christ himself promised that he would baptize us in the Holy Spirit: 'In a few days you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you' (Acts 1:5-8). The baptism in the Holy Spirit is intended for all believers: 'The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off for all whom the Lord our God will call.' (Acts 2:39) According to scripture this experience is a necessary foundation for every Christian, and not an optional extra. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to live this new life. The Greek word for '**power**' is **dunamis**, we get our English word 'dynamite' from it. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the dynamic power of God himself exploding from within us! This experience is not the same as being 'born of the Spirit' (John 3:3-8). It is a subsequent filling and empowering (see Acts 8:12-17; 19:1-6). However, it can happen all at once and sometimes even prior to water baptism (see Acts 10:44-47).

How do you receive this gift?

There are five instances in Acts of people receiving this gift: see Acts 2:1-4, 8:14-17, 10:44-46; 19:1-7. They either received it as a sovereign act of God or by the laying of the hands of those already baptized in the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the one actually who baptizes in the Holy Spirit, not other people (Matthew 3:11, Acts 2:33). He is not limited to how he baptizes, **but he does promise to baptize those who ask in faith** (Luke 11:13, Hebrews 11:6)

What should you expect to happen?

Just as in water baptism, where you are completely engulfed in water, so it is with the baptism in the Holy Spirit you should expect to be filled to overflowing (see John 7:38-39). One clear evidence of this in-filling and overflow is a supernatural gift enabling you to speak with other tongues or languages (Acts 2:4).

Speaking in tongues is a beautiful and powerful gift from God. It is another language you have never

learned which you should use to worship and praise God and pray to him. It can be an earthly or heavenly language (Acts 2:11, 1Corinthians 13:1). By it you are enabled to speak mysteries to God in your spirit (1Corinthians 14:2), and it is a means of building up your spiritual strength and perception (1Corinthians 14:4; Jude 20). 'Do I have to speak in tongues?' Wrong question! **Expect to speak in tongues**, it is an important new spiritual weapon for you to use in prayer and praise. Through using it properly you will be strengthened in your Christian life and keep your 'spiritual antennae' open. While the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a one-off experience it is important that the Holy Spirit is involved in all areas of your Christian life: for example he gives you the power to witness (Luke 24:48 and Acts 1:8); he enables you to live the Christian life (Romans 14:17); he empowers you with his gifts (1Corinthians 12:8-10 and Romans 12:6-8); he produces the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-26) which is the life of Jesus Christ himself. So be filled with the Spirit!

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

What is the Kingdom of God? Jesus taught us to pray: ***'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'*** (Matthew 6:10).

The **kingdom of God is his rule coming from heaven to be expressed in human lives here on earth**. God's will is done perfectly in heaven. Where it is done here on earth his kingdom rule is seen. The kingdom of God can thus be defined as the rule of God in action. It is the declaration of God's absolute sovereignty, of his total order of life in this world and the next. The Kingdom of God is primarily God's dynamic reign or kingly rule, his authority and government established under the kingship of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. His kingly reign produces the kingly order of God in our lives - righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (**Romans 14:17**). Through our salvation in Christ we are delivered from the bondage of Satan's domain and enter the Kingdom of God (**John 3:3, Colossians 1:13-14**). The fantastically good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God who was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died as a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins, rose again from the dead and ascended to the Father's right hand where he now reigns as Lord of all.

The Kingdom is consequently the sphere in which the kingly reign of God is experienced. His subjects are the people who enter the kingdom through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, and who live under his lordship, governed by his risen life in the power of the Holy Spirit (**see Matthew 4:23, 3:2, 18:3, John 3:5-8**). These subjects of the kingdom constitute the church - they are the kingdom community. At Pentecost all who received Jesus as Lord and Christ (the King of the Kingdom and Savior of the world), were baptised and added to 'their number' (**Acts 2:41**). **Therefore it is impossible to be in the kingdom of God without being part of the church.**

The church is not the kingdom, but it witnesses to the kingdom. One of its main tasks is to display in this present evil age the life and fellowship of the 'age to come'. The church has a dual character: it is the people of the 'age to come', but it still lives in this age, being constituted of mortal men and women. This means that while in this age the church will never attain to perfection, it must nevertheless display the life and perfect order of the end time kingdom of God. Acts 2:42-47 gives us a model of such a community; even though it was imperfect they affected the whole of the known world within a generation with the gospel of the kingdom.

So, while there is an inseparable relationship between the kingdom of God and the church, they are not the same. The kingdom is God's reign and the realm in which the blessings of his reign are experienced. The church is the fellowship of those who have experienced God's reign and entered into the enjoyment, privileges and responsibilities of its blessings. The kingdom creates the church, works through the church, and is proclaimed in the world by the church (**1 Peter 2:4-10**).

The Kingdom of God will never end; it will last forever!

PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Why We Pray

Version |Rev. 10/11

Ver. 1-EDR

1 Thessalonians 5:17 says: **"pray continually."** It's an easy verse to remember for all of us. But it's a verse of such importance. To live as a Christian is to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and that relationship needs to be cultivated and nourished. One way we can do that is through prayer.

Think of other relationships you have; maybe with a parent, a husband, wife, or child. Now begin to think of how difficult that relationship would be if you never communicated, never talked to them and, just as important, never listened to them. That is exactly the same with prayer and communication with Jesus. We all need to grow and cultivate our relationship with Him.

Communication with anyone is never one sided. Don't let your prayer life be one sided either but spend time listening to God. He will speak to you if you take time to learn the sound of His distinct voice to you.

Prayer has been described as our hotline to heaven. When we pray God listens and God always answers. As a Christian there is no greater privilege than to talk to Jesus directly.

Prayer is more than a list of requests and wish-lists; in fact that is precisely what prayer should not be. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus says: **"seek first the Kingdom of heaven and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well."**

When you pray, aim to make kingdom things your first priority. God the Father will bless you and abundantly supply all you need because he loves to bless his children and your Father knows what you need before you ask him (Matthew 6:8) Let us be clear, there is nothing wrong with going to Jesus in prayer for specific things, but do not make those things the reason for praying. Pray because you want to spend time with Jesus and you want to hear what he has to say to you.

Why We Worship

Songs, music, instruments, singing, clapping, and lifting hands; bowing down on our knees are all important expressions of our worship. But it is important to understand that they are not worship alone. So what is worship?

Worship is the lifestyle that you and I as Christians are to live every moment or every day.

"Therefore I urge you, offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God for this is your spiritual act of worship." (Romans 12:1-2)

The first mention of the word worship appears in the book of Genesis when God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Isaac was all Abraham had. He was the embodiment of every promise that God had given to Abraham and in asking him to sacrifice him, God was asking Abraham to lay down his whole life, his future and his dreams in obedience to God.

Abraham agreed and knowing what he was about to do said to his servants:

"Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." (Genesis 22:5)

Abraham's willingness to sacrifice was his act of worship; and that is what true worship is, laying down our lives, our hopes and dreams, preferring the will of God to our own.

God stopped Abraham before he went through with it because He saw that He was first in Abraham's life. In laying down our lives and living out a lifestyle of worship we show God that He is first, that Jesus is Lord of our life.

Fasting is a spiritual discipline found throughout the Bible. Moses, Elijah, Esther, David, Anna, Jesus, Paul, even cities and whole nations are recorded as having fasted. But what exactly is fasting? Well, it is simply the deliberate abstention from food, and sometimes from fluids, for spiritual purposes. Fasting is not a hunger strike to twist God's arm; neither is it dieting to cleanse the body (which is occasionally good to do). Nor is it a form of self-denial to show how spiritual we are. Simply put, we fast to find God. Jesus taught that we should fast (Matthew 6:16). He did not say 'if you fast' but 'when you fast'. While there are no direct commands for us to fast, if we read the Bible correctly we will see that fasting is an important aspect of our relationship with God.

There are three kinds of fast in the Bible: the normal fast, which entails abstention from food but not from water (Luke 4:1-2); the partial fast, where the normal diet is restricted or modified (Daniel 1:8-15; 10:2-3); and the absolute fast in which no food or liquids are taken (Acts 9:9; Esther 4:16). We also have accounts of fasts in which no food or drink was taken for forty days (Exodus 34:28, Deuteronomy 9:9-18).

What is the purpose of fasting?

First and foremost we **fast unto God** (Isaiah 58:3; Zechariah 7:5).

We fast to humble ourselves before God (Ezra 8:21; Psalm 35:13). This is not to debase ourselves or to grovel before God, but to come before him to call on him in **true humility**.

We fast to **set ourselves apart** to God. The prophet Joel called for a holy fast and a sacred assembly in order for God's people to consecrate themselves (Joel 2:15-16).

We fast to remind ourselves that it is God who is the real source of our life (Matthew 4:4). In fasting we forego the legitimate things of life food and drink to show that we really live by 'every word that comes from the mouth of God'.

We fast to be heard by God in prayer (Ezra 8:23). Prayer to God is the natural accompaniment to our periods of fasting; we set aside the legitimate appetites of the body to pursue God in times of fasting with prayer. Of course, God hears prayer that is not accompanied with fasting, but together they form a powerful force. Fasting may not be physically pleasant for us, but it certainly does us a great amount of spiritual good.

What are some of the effects of fasting with prayer?

We receive revelation from God (Daniel 9:2-3, 21-22). Fasting helps sharpen our spiritual appetite and **enables us to hear God speak to us more clearly through the Bible and the Holy Spirit**.

It brings deliverance from demonic forces (Mark 9:29). There are times when God may call on us to pray and fast to release those held under the power of the devil.

It opens the way for **Spirit-led direction** for specific circumstances that we have to face as individuals and as the church of Jesus Christ (1 Chronicles 20:1-14; Ezra 8:23).

It loosens the bands of wickedness and chains of injustice and sets the oppressed free and He promises to restore and rebuild (Isaiah 58).

It can even change situations (Jonah 3). The city of Nineveh turned to God in prayer and fasting, repenting of their sin toward him and he did not bring on them the judgement he had threatened.

If you are not used to fasting but want to start, build up slowly. Don't try to fast for three days if you have never before! Whatever you do, do it unto the Lord. **He will hear you.**

STN has a church-wide corporate fasting and praying period in the beginning of each new year for 21 days using the Daniel Fast. The concept of a Daniel fast comes from [Daniel 1:8-14](#), "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, 'I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you.'

Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 'Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.' So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days."

The background of the Daniel fast is that Daniel and his three friends had been deported to Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians conquered Judah ([2 Kings 24:13-14](#)). Daniel and his three friends were put into the Babylonian court servant "training program." Part of the program was learning Babylonian customs, beliefs, laws, and practices. The eating habits of the Babylonians were not in complete agreement with the Mosaic Law. As a result, Daniel asked if he and his three friends could be excused from eating the meat (which was likely sacrificed to Babylonian false gods and idols).

So, a Daniel fast is eating only fruits and vegetables for a certain amount of time and abstaining from meat products. The Bible nowhere commands believers to observe a Daniel fast. As a result, it is a matter of Christian freedom whether to observe a Daniel fast. For more information on the Daniel fast, we recommend <http://DanielFast.wordpress.com>.

DIVORCE

Divorce is a tough issue for churches these days. Our culture too often seems to consider divorce a minor issue, not a serious problem, and divorce rates are correspondingly high. As Christians, however, we take divorce seriously for the following reasons:

1. Marriage was established by God, and it has always been seen as a holy union with profound spiritual dimensions. Something that matters so much to God should matter to Christians, leading us to take divorce seriously. (See Hebrews 13:4.)
2. When people get married, they make solemn vows before God, and breaking vows is a serious issue - an issue of morality and integrity, especially for Christians who are called to stand by their word. (See Ecclesiastes 5:4-7 and Matthew 5:33-37.)
3. The dissolution of a marriage has profound effects on both adults involved, and on any children who are caught in the crossfire too. If we at STN truly care about people, we have to care about marriage. (See Romans 14:7, 21.)
4. An under-rated problem has to do with the unintended effects of each divorce on other families in the church. If divorce becomes too readily accepted and appears to be a consequence-free solution to marriage problems, more and more couples may be tempted to give up working on their marriages, and divorce can actually become somewhat contagious. (See I Corinthians 12:26.)
5. The success rates for subsequent marriages are low. If couples don't receive adequate counseling to uncover the issues which sabotaged their first marriage, the odds are high that they will repeat their mistakes. Not only that, but the pain of a failed marriage can run deep, also suggesting the need for professional counseling. (See Galatians 6:1-5.)

Churches respond in various ways to couples who separate and plan to divorce.

1. Some do nothing, and in so doing seem to condone divorce.

2. Some require reconciliation, and pressure one or both parties to leave the church if they don't reconcile, seeing divorce as a sin which cannot be tolerated in a Christian community.

3. Some try to help the parties save their marriages whenever possible, and if that is not possible, they try to help the people deal with the dissolution of their marriage in the most Christian way possible.

The third option is our preferred option at Save The Nations.

In order to accomplish that preferred option, we make the following requests of people who are separated and contemplating divorce.

1. Do not gloss over the seriousness of breaking solemn vows made to another human being in the presence of God. (See Matthew 19:1-15.) Do not try to minimize or defend this tragedy, or to blame everything on the other party. It is far better to acknowledge your own fault as fully as possible, and to prayerfully repent of your part in the failure of your marriage. "God is close to a contrite heart," Scripture makes clear (see Psalm 32, Psalm 34, and Psalm 52, for example).

2. There is a difficult balance here. If you are capable of saving your marriage, you should make every effort to save it, including professional counseling, patience, and prayer. If you are not able to save your marriage, you should acknowledge your inability with real sadness. If you walk away from a marriage that you could save, you are sinning. You are breaking the solemn vows that you made when you got married ... "for better or for worse." If you leave a marriage that you cannot save, sincerely having done everything in your power to save it, this should be seen and acknowledged as a real tragedy.

3. As far as it depends on you, you should achieve the greatest degree possible of relational reconciliation with your estranged partner. (See Romans 12:14-18.) You should acknowledge and ask for forgiveness for all of your failures - naming them as specifically as possible. You should extend complete forgiveness to your partner too. Walking through a divorce with deep grief, humility, and forgiveness is a very different thing from walking through it with bitterness, self-justification, and anger. The former wounds can heal; the latter will scar you for life - and others will likely be wounded too.

4. If, before or since your separation, you have become sexually involved with another person, you should acknowledge that you have committed the sin of adultery. No amount of focusing on the failures of your partner will justify this behavior of yours (see Matthew 5:27-32). Even if you have not physically committed adultery, but if you have allowed yourself to cultivate an emotional relationship which encouraged you to leave your spouse, without giving your sincere best effort to patiently work to save your marriage ... that shows a deep failure which calls for deep repentance. The best way ahead for you is to face your sin, repent of it, and prepare to move on with an appropriate humility and spiritual contrition (See Proverbs 28:13.)

Please be clear on this: sex outside of marriage is sin, and cannot be condoned among professing Christians (see I Corinthians 9:5-11). If a Christian commits sexual sin, he or she needs to repent and get back on the path of wholehearted discipleship. We do not expect non-Christians to act like Christians, but we do expect Christians to act like Christians. That includes taking seriously the Christian's call to a holy life (See I Thessalonians 4:3-4).

5. We strongly urge you not to date anyone until you are legally divorced. To do so can be a danger signal for a number of reasons. First, you may not have taken adequate time to process the failure of your marriage; moving into another relationship is not fair to yourself or your partner under these circumstances. Second, your marriage still may be salvageable; to jump into another relationships could ruin those chances. Third, your behavior could reflect a lack of seriousness about the failure of your marriage. Fourth, you could be setting a bad example for other Christians. We can not be legalistic about this, but we urge and request you to abstain from dating until you are legally divorced for these reasons.

6. If there are contributing factors which led to your divorce - addictions, violence, uncontrolled anger,

mental or emotional illnesses, lasting effects of past traumas - please commit yourself to uncover and deal thoroughly with every deeper issue. It will be hard - but if you don't deal with the underlying issues, in the long run you will suffer far more. We strongly encourage you to get professional help in this regard. If you had cancer or heart disease, you wouldn't expect to treat your illness yourself. Similarly, it is foolhardy to try to heal yourself from a problem of this magnitude. We can make referrals to qualified and caring Christian counselors to help you through this important healing process.

7. When you speak with others about your divorce, please join us in urging people to work to build and preserve healthy marriages. Please do not make it easier for others to give up on a marriage because of your influence. Saving a troubled marriage is hard, but few if any divorced people will say that surviving a divorce is, in the long run, an easy thing either. Just as a person who has survived a serious car accident will urge others to wear their seatbelts, drive carefully, etc., you should become a force to strengthen marriages, not weaken them, in the Christian community and beyond.

8. If you are facing divorce, please ask for help early. Your pastors or other church staff or leaders should be valuable resources. They will ask you to follow the guidelines presented here.

If you are a member of Save The Nations and you do not wish to follow these guidelines regarding your divorce, we ask that you voluntarily withdraw your membership. (See Matthew 18:15-20.) Feel free to continue attending the church, but out of respect for our high standards of membership, we ask you to withdraw your membership until the time comes when you can again be identified as an exemplary member. If you are committed to these guidelines, we urge you to uphold your membership and benefit from every possible resource here at Save The Nations - Sunday Celebrations, small groups, classes, etc. You need the support and encouragement and accountability of your Christian community now more than ever. And as you learn and grow through this experience, you will have much comfort and help to offer others who face similar struggles. (See II Corinthians 1:3-11.)

Conclusion: If a person has a terrible accident, perhaps breaking or losing a leg or arm, it is a very serious emergency. But it need not be fatal. The person can be healed. But if they don't take their injury seriously enough soon enough, their condition will only get worse and become harder to heal. Similarly, the breakdown of a marriage is serious, painful, and potentially crippling. But if you take it seriously, with God's help, you can become healthy and strong again - healthier and stronger than ever before. That is our prayer for you.

If you take the dissolution of your marriage seriously, and if you acknowledge the failures, poor judgment, personal weaknesses, and unhealed wounds from the past that led to its dissolution, and if you sincerely turn to God for healing and strength and forgiveness and empowerment, divorce is a tragedy that you can survive, move beyond, and grow through. We at Save The Nations want to be part of helping you do that.

In short, whenever possible, divorce must be prevented. When it cannot be prevented, it should be faced courageously, grieved deeply, learned from thoroughly, and recovered from fully. As in every other area of life, we thank God that we are not alone in the process.

HOMOSEXUALITY

The Bible consistently tells us that homosexual activity is a sin ([Genesis 19:1-13](#); [Leviticus 18:22](#); [Romans 1:26-27](#); [1 Corinthians 6:9](#)). [Romans 1:26-27](#) teaches specifically that homosexuality is a result of denying and disobeying God. When a person continues in sin and disbelief, the Bible tells us that God "gives them over" to even more wicked and depraved sin in order to show them the futility and hopelessness of life apart from God. [1 Corinthians 6:9](#) proclaims that homosexual "offenders" will not inherit the kingdom of God.

God does not create a person with homosexual desires. The Bible tells us that a person becomes a homosexual because of sin ([Romans 1:24-27](#)), and ultimately because of their own choice. A person may be born with a greater susceptibility to homosexuality, just as people are born with a tendency to violence and other sins. That does not excuse the person choosing to sin by giving into their sinful desires. If a person is born with a greater susceptibility to anger / rage, does that make it right for them to give into

those desires? Of course not! The same is true for homosexuality.

However, the Bible does not describe homosexuality as a “greater” sin than any other. All sin is offensive to God. Homosexuality is just one of the many things listed in [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#) that will keep a person from the kingdom of God. According to the Bible, God’s forgiveness is just as available to a homosexual as it is to an adulterer, idol worshipper, murderer, thief, etc. God also promises the strength for victory over sin, including homosexuality, to all those who will believe in Jesus Christ for their salvation ([1 Corinthians 6:11](#); [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)).

Thus, at STN, we love the homosexual as they are but believe that God will not leave them as they are and our job as a church is to partner with God to love homosexuals and help them see that it is all in their “choices” not in their “genes”.

Women in Ministry

If you don’t know already, STN believes in women in ministry. We have two female pastors on staff and many female leaders in our church. But to help those who may not understand why STN favors women in ministry, we’ve put together our understanding of scripture below.

STN favors the possibility of women in all positions of ministry because it represents the glorious fulfillment of the gospel.

Galatians 3:27-28 say, *“As many who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is not ‘male and female.’ For you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*

Often when weighing Scripture with Scripture, we must decide what the general principle is and what might be the exception to the rule. In this case, clearly “In Christ there is not ‘male and female’” is the general principle to which any other verses would be exceptions.

For example, we would not say, “A woman is not to teach or have authority over a man, BUT in Christ there is no ‘male and female.’” The one relates to earthly administration, the other to heavenly, *spiritual* identity. Clearly the heavenly and spiritual have decisive precedence over the earthly and temporary. “You are *all* sons of God” (Gal. 3:26). Any earthly subordination or earthly distinction in role would be exactly that: earthly and temporary. We have no reason to believe that in heaven such differentiations will exist in role or authority.

Not “Male and Female”

Galatians 3:28 says, “In Christ there is not ‘male and female.’” Paul’s wording here alludes to Genesis 1:27 where God creates humans “male and female.” After Paul has used “neither-nor” several times, he interestingly switches his grammar: “neither Jew *nor* Greek... neither slave *nor* free”—then “not ‘male *and* female.’” Paul was not using awkward grammar. He made this switch to allude intentionally to Genesis 1:27 where God created humans “male and female.”

Therefore, in Christ there is not “male and female.” The distinction, made at creation, is undone in Christ. Indeed, in heaven any subordination of husband and wife will not exist because in heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels (e.g. Mark 12:25-26).

Moving Closer to Heaven on Earth

For purposes of comparison, we might note that the books of the New Testament assume that Christians can have slaves. There were individuals in the first century who did not practice slavery on principle (see Philo on the Essenes, *Every Good Person is Free* 79), but the New Testament books do not argue this point. They never argue for the abolition of slavery. Even in Philemon, Paul does not explicitly tell this slave owner to set his slave free. Indeed, Colossians—a letter often thought to have accompanied Philemon—reinforces traditional slave-master roles (Col. 3:22-4:1).

Nevertheless, STN believes that the world moved closer to heaven when slavery was abolished. Similarly, the world moves closer to heaven when we enact as much as possible the equality of men and women on a spiritual plane. Some might argue that the female body has implications for the roles of women on the earthly plane—this remains to be seen. But the glorious proclamation of the Christian gospel is that both male and female enter equally into Christ, both have equal access to God through Christ, and in heaven there will be no subordination of one to the other. Male spirit and female spirit are equal in Christ, and there can be no hierarchy between them.

Regardless of what you think on the question of husbands and wives, the heavenly trajectory in relation to the female spirit seems clear. How could we argue that in Christ a woman has any less access to heaven or the Spirit than a man? And if a woman has equal access to the Spirit, how could we argue that she has any less of God's word to convey than a man? Some may argue for an earthly hierarchy, but how could anyone possibly deny that "not male and female" is a fundamental spiritual truth?

Females Who Prophesied in the New Testament

Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17 predicted that Christian daughters would prophesy. These verses are undeniable affirmations that God uses women to convey spiritual truths to the earth. It thus reinforces our claim that women have access to the Spirit in Christ just as men do. We cannot use our interpretations of other Scriptures to negate this clear implication of Acts.

Indeed, in Acts 21:9 we learn that the 4 virgin daughters of Philip the evangelist prophesied. 1 Corinthians 11:5 refers to *married* women prophesying as well. We know they are married because their lack of covering dishonors their head—which 11:3 defines as their husbands. For this reason we cannot claim that only single women can preach.

Similarly, there is nothing in these contexts that indicates these women only prophesied to women. Indeed, the 1 Corinthians 11 passage implies the contrary. Since the spirits of women and men are undifferentiated "in Christ," we would be surprised if such a distinction were made in the first place. Christ has conquered the limitations of the earth and the sin of Eve! Any lingering traces of the limitations of earth will fully disappear in the kingdom of God.

STN favors the possibility of women in all positions of ministry because the Biblical arguments against it don't hold up against close scrutiny.

Husband-Wives or Man-Woman

We should probably distinguish husband/wife issues from the issue of women in ministry in general. You can fully believe that the husband is the head of the wife without negating the possibility of women ministering to men in general. For this reason, the submission passages in Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Peter do not clearly address the issue of women in ministry. They deal with earthly roles within the family rather than the spiritual role of female ministry.

1 Corinthians 14:34-36

Similarly, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 have a husband-wife situation in view, which eliminates it from the debate as well. When the Greek word *gyne* ("woman," "wife") is used in the presence of *aner* ("husband"), it usually refers to wives in relation to husbands rather than women in relation to men in general. The word "to submit" reinforces this impression (14:34).

The 1 Corinthians 14 passage is difficult to understand in the first place because 1 Corinthians 11 has already implied that women *did* prophecy in Corinthian worship (cf. 11:5). The very dynamics of 1 Corinthians 11 are created largely because of a situation in which a man's wife is doing something prominent in the presence of other men. She needs to cover her head and be modest in the presence of God, angels, and men who aren't her husband.

In this light 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 cannot be an absolute statement. Otherwise Paul would contradict himself. He would assume that women prophesy in worship only to forbid it later in the same letter! Thus we can't use these verses to argue against women in ministry.

Women Did Minister to Men!

Regardless of what you think on the husband/wife issue, we *do* see women in the NT ministering to men. Priscilla helps instruct Apollos in Acts 18:26—and she is mentioned *first* before her husband in this instance! Phoebe is a “deacon” of the church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1). This is the same *exact* word used in Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8 for church leaders. It is not deaconess—it is the masculine form of the word. The church meets in the homes of women like Lydia (Acts 16:15) and Nympha (Col. 4:15). The Junias of Romans 16:7 may even be an apostle.

1 Timothy 2:12-15

Like 1 Corinthians 14, the comment in 1 Timothy 2:12 uses the word *woman/wife* (*gyne*) in the same sentence as *husband/male* (*aner*): “I do not allow a wife/woman to exert authority over a husband/man.” Since the arguments that follow relate to Adam and Eve—a husband-wife pair, it is quite possible that these verses also relate to the marriage relationship. If so, they also would not apply to the issue of women in ministry. In this case we have run out of verses against women taking such roles, and the objections are at an end.

Much ink has been spilt over the precise meaning of these verses. Accordingly, it is easy to get lost in the trees and miss the forest. In the end, we certainly would not want to make 1 Timothy 2:12-15 the key verses in our theology of women. We believe that God inspired these verses to meet the needs of the ancient Ephesians. But if we were to take them as absolute statements, they would imply that Christ’s death did not atone for all sins—in short, blasphemy.

A literal translation of the Greek of 2:14-15 reads, “The wife/woman, being deceived, has come to be in transgression. But *she* will be saved through childbearing, if *they* remain in faith and love and holiness with self-control.” The mention of Eve’s transgression in connection with childbearing alludes to Genesis 3:16. The punishment of Eve’s sin was increased pain in the birth process, a pain that all women continue to experience.

What is difficult is that 1 Timothy uses a tense that implies women are still in transgression as a result of the sin of Eve (the perfect tense), a state from which childbearing frees them. Our faith in Christ cannot allow us to take this comment at face value. Do we really want to argue that women today are still “in transgression” because of the sin of Eve, a state of transgression from which childbearing “saves” them?

1 Timothy is making a point to the Ephesians here, but it cannot negate the fact that Christ atoned for *all* transgressions, including the sin of Eve. To say otherwise is nothing short of blasphemy! This is scarcely a verse on which to base our theology. This passage likely reflects the issue of false teaching with which the Pastorals are so strongly concerned (cf. 2 Tim. 3:6). The statement of 1 Tim 2 here is *heretical* if we take it absolutely. We get the sneaking suspicion that these verses are so strong because some women at Ephesus were somehow serving as catalysts for false teaching there.

Nor can we use the order of creation in 1 Timothy 2:13 as an absolute argument: “Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Tim. 2:13). We’ve already seen that Galatians 3:28 ultimately undoes the differentiation between male and female made in creation. The birth order of Adam and Eve relates to the earthly and physical—clearly a less significant element in the equation than our spiritual destiny in Christ.

Nor are *all* women more gullible than *all* men—such a claim would simply be false. Yet many would use 1 Timothy 2:14 as if it were making such a claim: “Adam was not deceived, but the woman—because she was deceived—has come to be in transgression.” If we don’t view 1 Tim 2:12-15 in the light of specific problems at Ephesus, it leads to tremendous theological problems and indeed falsehoods—not preferable destinations by any means. Do we really want to take this passage with all its difficulties and make it the centerpiece for our theology of women?

STN favors the possibility of women in all positions of ministry because it makes sense, while to oppose women in ministry as a matter of principle doesn’t make sense.

Whether we men like it or not, women are just as smart as we are (often they're smarter). Women mature more quickly than men as a rule. Women tend to be more loving than men (and thus more Christian in their behavior, since love is the fulfillment of the law). The men of Paul's day more often than not would not have accepted these claims, but no one today can seriously dispute them unless they avoid a lot of women.

If a woman has gifts of leadership, gifts of speaking, and spiritual insight, there is no logical reason why we shouldn't actively seek for her to be leader and authority over men who are less gifted, less insightful, and who have less spiritual discernment. This is just good sense, bottom line. To place a less competent male over a more spiritual and gifted female—simply because of the presence of a physical organ not particularly known for thinking or spirituality—well, it's pretty hard to make any sense of it.

We can rationalize our opposition, but it's just bad thinking. Does God promote bad thinking? Is it really God's character to make up rules just for their own sake, even though they don't make any sense (cf. Mark 2:27)? Sometimes God stoops to our weakness, like when He allowed divorce in the Old Testament (Deut. 24:1; Matt. 19:8), but ultimately He works His people toward the ideal. This is the age of the ideal!

Jesus and Paul regularly teach us not to put God in a box with our interpretations of the rules. The New Testament authors consistently interpreted the Old Testament spiritually more than literally. So if a woman senses God's call, if a community of believers sees the evidence of that call, if the woman demonstrates leadership ability, why would we oppose this woman ministering? It would make no sense to oppose her.

No rational argument can be made against the possibility of women in ministry other than the fact that people often don't accept a woman minister. If some men feel intimidated by a woman God has called, we need to help them work through it, not reinforce their insecurity. If a woman feels like her comfort zone is called into question by another woman taking leadership, we need to help her grow, not support her weakness. Obviously everything must be done in love, and God even accommodated the weakness of the early Christians on these issues from time to time. In the times of this ignorance God winked at these things, but now calls us to end earthly mindedness and move further in the fulfillment of the gospel.

We must set our eyes toward Jesus and toward heaven. God is a God of the possibilities of heaven, not of the limitations of earth. He breaks the molds of this world and moves us toward the next. Therefore, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus—the author and finisher of our faith!

If you should have any further questions on these or issues not mentioned in this document, please email our lead pastor, Ken Albin at pastorken@savethenations.com

If there is an issue you think should be addressed in this document but isn't, please email our Executive Pastor Liz Rios @ pastorliz@savethenations.com