

An Open Letter Concerning Santa Cruz Bible Church

The men whose names appear at the bottom of this document all serve as pastor-elders of local churches in Santa Cruz County. We recently became aware of a sermon preached by a fellow pastor serving a church in our area that has, historically, been a congregation of consequential influence. On March 13, 2022, Matt Roden, lead pastor of Santa Cruz Bible Church (SCBC), preached a “sermon” for SCBC titled “Where are We Going? (Part 6 of 6).”¹ What Matt said in this sermon was so contrary to God’s Word that we believe – for Matt’s good, for the good of SCBC, for the good of our congregations, for the good of Christ’s kingdom, and for the good of our unbelieving neighbors – that a public response is necessary. Please note, in what follows we represent ourselves as individuals, and do not, in this case, speak formally for the churches we serve.

Context

The six-part sermon series titled, “Where are We Going?” came as part of a reset at SCBC. Under new leadership (particularly Matt), the church has charted a future course with a new vision and new values. SCBC’s new vision is, “Hope for Everyone.” In order to realize this vision, SCBC believes it must be defined by five characteristics: “Inviting, Invested, Intentional, Innovative, Inclusive.” We can summarize SCBC’s perspective on its future with these words from Matt: “We believe the church is for every age, every race, every stage in life, place in life, every gender or sexual orientation, if you’re unhoused or housed, if you’re hung over, barely hanging on at all, wherever you are, we believe the church should be a place of hope for everyone.”²

For the purposes of this response to Matt and SCBC, we take this vision and the associated characteristics at face value. This does not mean we affirm what we do not address here, namely the vision as a whole and the first four characteristics. Rather, our purpose is to remain intentionally focused in what follows.³ Certainly we agree that Jesus’ church offers the world hope. But, we hasten to add, that hope is *Gospel* hope, irreducibly tied to every word of Scripture properly interpreted and applied.

In the last of this six-part series, Matt addressed the characteristic of inclusion. SCBC should be a place marked by inclusivity, or so the assertion goes. Regrettably, Matt’s treatment of inclusion fell short of the Bible’s truth. Inasmuch as followers of Jesus – whether at SCBC or elsewhere – hear and accept Matt’s words, we believe the body the Christ

¹ We put “sermon” in quotation marks intentionally. We understand a sermon to be a faithful exposition of God’s Word, or the faithful application of Scripture to an important topic. Unfortunately, the sermon in question accomplished neither end. The sermon video is available via SCBC’s website at <https://subsplash.com/santacruz bible/sermons/mi/+wsvsgrh>.

² All of the quotations in this document attributed to Matt Roden come from the previously referenced sermon.

³ Major questions we have for SCBC include things like: 1) What is the Gospel?; 2) What is the church?; 3) What is the purpose of the church?

is harmed. Thus, we're compelled here to address and refute this sermon at length. May God guard our hearts in humility. May he make us quickly responsive to loving correction if ever the day comes that we need it in a similar fashion.

Defining Inclusion

After situating the concept of inclusion within the context of SCBC's new vision, Matt set out to define what he meant by the term. He drew from the *Oxford Dictionary* to say that inclusion is, "The practice of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized." It's noteworthy that later in his sermon, Matt went beyond the dictionary and expanded his definition of inclusion (see below).

Having established a foundational definition, Matt then identified who he considers to be "marginalized" or "excluded" people. His categories of persons were the sort identified in present-day "woke" theory: 1) Black, indigenous, and people of color; 2) Women; 3) Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, "+"; 4) Unhoused; 5) Under-resourced. To be clear, Matt noted these five categories are not all-encompassing. Rather, he presented them as a representative sample of who we should imagine when identifying the "marginalized" or "excluded." According to Matt, it is the business of the church to lift-up the marginalized and to include the excluded.

Now, there's an important conceptual point for us to make pertinent to the idea of exclusion and the body of Christ. But first, we should note a place of agreement with Matt. Indeed, at times and in places, persons in the categories Matt identified have been unjustly marginalized or excluded from various aspects of society. We could say the same for persons of *any* category one might care to establish. Certainly, for believers in the United States, our history includes the lamentable reality of chattel slavery, or the abuse of native tribes (and native tribes' abuse of non-natives), or prejudicial treatment of Hispanic and Asian communities, and the list could go on. These are real histories with real consequences, some of which echo into the present. But the issue at hand for us is whether Matt's treatment of inclusion, as he defined it, is biblically faithful with respect to Jesus' church.

As we think about inclusion in general, it's important to pause and ask a question that runs something like this: "Does Jesus mean for his church to exclude anyone?" Or, to make the question more appropriate to biblical language and to God's heart, and less responsive to the cultural moment, "Does Jesus mean for his church to make distinctions between persons?" If the answer is "No, never," then we should be more sympathetic than critical of Matt's message. But, if the answer is, "Yes, sometimes," then we have biblical grounds for questioning both Matt's teaching and SCBC's direction as a church.

While we won't try and answer our question in full at the moment, notice the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:4-5 as he instructs the church about how to address unrepentant sexual sin on the part of one of its members: "When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, you are to deliver

this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.”⁴ A few verses later, Paul tells the believers “not to associate with anyone” who claims the name of Christ and yet “is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler” (1 Cor. 5:11). Again, the context here seems to be that of professing believers engaged in unrepentant sin. In 2 Corinthians 6:14-15, Paul writes, “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?” Finally, hear the words of Jesus in Revelation 2 as he speaks to the church in Thyatira: “...I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols (Rev. 2:20).” What’s the point? Simply this: Paul taught that it is the duty of the church to make distinctions between persons. He thought so on the authority of the Lord who chose him and commissioned him to his work. Jesus also taught that the church must make distinctions between persons if it is to remain faithful to him. Clearly, it is not the business of the church to “include” everyone and “exclude” no one.

Is Inclusion “Biblical”

Having defined inclusion, Matt then proceeded to argue that his concept of inclusion is biblical. Here we must be careful to observe a fine, but important point. Matt built his theology of inclusion on a secular foundation, and then sought biblical warrant to justify that foundation. What do we mean? We mean that Matt’s concept of inclusion came not from Scripture, but rather from a word defined out of the English dictionary and populated with present-day examples of what culture calls the marginalized and excluded. He did not work to consider the *Bible’s* definition of inclusion (such as it might be), nor the *biblical* categories of people we might consider excluded and marginalized. Rather, he assumed a secular (and, frankly, “woke”) paradigm, and then attempted to match Scripture against that paradigm.

Why is inclusion biblical according to Matt Roden? As we understand him, Matt offered the following points of biblical warrant for his assertion that “inclusion is really a Christian concept”:

- First, God created everyone in his own image (Genesis 1:27), therefore everyone is of equal worth.

Our Response: With Matt, we say, “Yes and amen!” to Genesis 1:27 and the truth of basic equality between human beings as to their worth. But notice how Matt makes the discussion of inclusion *contingent* on “worth.” In other words, inclusion – according to Matt’s definition of what it means to be inclusive – flows from worth. If every human being stands before God equal in worth, then every human being must be equally “included” in the context of the church. But what if you raise your voice at SCBC and say, “I believe we ought to exclude NAME, a professing Christian, from

⁴ The Scripture quotations in this document come from the English Standard Version (ESV).

taking the Lord's Supper because he's living in unrepentant homosexual sin"? Per Matt's paradigm, you must not say such a thing because in doing so you insult that person's worth. Don't mind that such sin is every bit as gross as the incestuous heterosexual behavior Paul takes issue with in the 1 Corinthians 15 passage cited above.

- Second, Jesus' work on the cross opened the door of salvation to all people, tearing down the wall of hostility between "outsiders" and "insiders."

Our Response: Matt spent a great deal of time on this point, touching Ephesians 2:14, Galatians 2:14, and James 2:8-9. On the one hand, we want to again say, "Yes and amen!" Indeed, Christ's sacrificial death on behalf of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation blew the door to heaven wide-open as it were. Jesus will by no means turn away any person who comes to him in repentant faith. But our "yes and amen" comes concurrent with real concern for how Matt handled the Scriptures. For instance, he mischaracterized the Old Covenant by suggesting that salvation and redemption belonged only to the Jews. He mischaracterized the story of Acts as the account of many "outsiders" coming to faith while "insiders" "freak[ed] out" in response. He did not handle the verses in Galatians 2, Galatians 3, Ephesians 2, Colossians 3, and James 2 with appropriate attention to context and actual meaning. Having said this, these points are relatively minor compared to the way Matt established "outsiders" and "insiders."

Subtly, but clearly, Matt drew a comparison between the "outsiders" of the New Testament church (i.e. believing Gentiles who were previously outside the Israelite covenant people of God) and today's "outsiders" in the matter of inclusion; namely the marginalized and excluded persons he identified at the beginning (black, indigenous, people of color; women; LGBTQ+; unhoused; under-resourced). Concurrently then, the "insiders" of the New Testament church (i.e. believing Jews whom Matt characterized as "freaking out") must parallel present-day, church-going believers who otherwise want to "exclude" today's outsiders. Thus, if you belong to one of Matt's five marginalized categories, you are the victimized outsider. Contrasting, if you are someone who, for instance, thinks a person cannot be a Christian and continue to live an LGBTQ+ lifestyle (or "identify" as LGBTQ+), then you are the insider who opposes the Gospel itself.

While there are multiple reasons to reject Matt's treatment of "outsider" and "insider," our chief issue lies in his approach to persons claiming an LGBTQ+ lifestyle and identity. In Matt's sermon, such persons fit into the "victimized outsider" camp. Let's be clear on what we mean. The "L" stands for "lesbian"; the "G" for "gay"; the "B" for "bisexual"; the "T" for "transgender"; the "Q" for "queer"; and the "+" for an undefined panoply of deviant sexual inclinations and actions. Taken together, the LGBTQ+ acronym spells out a series of sinful attitudes and activities that stand in direct contradiction to our holy God and his Word. When Paul speaks of Christ breaking down the "dividing wall of hostility" between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14), he means these words with reference to Christians; those who have repented of sin and are

following Christ Jesus as their Lord and Savior. A person cannot claim the name of Christ and also continue their LGBTQ+ identity. Paul, whose writings Matt quoted from repeatedly, makes this point quite clear in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10: “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God” (see also Eph. 5:5, 1 Tim. 1:10, Rev. 21:8, Rev. 22:15). Paul did not view LGBTQ+ persons as outsiders whom the church should strive to make insiders apart from repentance and faith in Christ. It’s noteworthy that Matt never referenced sin nor repentance in his discussion of outsiders and insiders (nor, as we recall, in the entire sermon).

Perhaps Matt might claim that we mean more by outsiders becoming insiders than he did. Surely, we wouldn’t object to welcoming an LGBTQ+ person into a church service so that they can hear the Gospel, come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and meet Jesus? Of course we wouldn’t! Indeed, we address below how the church should welcome sinners of all stripes. But, suffice it to say, mere “welcome” is not the sort of “outsider becoming insider” inclusion that Matt has in mind, a point we’ll address momentarily.

- Third, Christ helps us see the value in everyone. It’s sin for us to pick and choose who matters.

Our Response: Again, Matt conflates “value” or “worth” with inclusion. For him, it seems, any manner of biblical distinction is picking and choosing “who matters.” We heard no categories in Matt’s treatment for affirming someone’s inherent worth as an image bearer of God, and yet also excluding them from some aspect of the church’s life because of sin. Acts and the New Testament epistles make it clear that the apostles thought differently than Matt. Add in the Gospels – like Matthew 18:15-20, for instance – and it’s clear that Jesus also taught differently than Matt did in this sermon.

Expanding the Definition of Inclusion

While Matt began his sermon with the dictionary definition of inclusion, about two-thirds of the way through, he significantly expanded what he meant by the concept. Notably, Matt did so just before raising the matter of LGBTQ+ persons in the church. Diversity, Matt said, is celebrating the presence of different people in a given context (e.g. the church). It’s what happens when different people are “invited to the party.” Inclusion goes further. Inclusion is “leading with the perspectives of different people.” Inclusion happens when “lots of different people are planning the party.” Inclusion means that everyone – and particularly the marginalized and excluded – have a seat at the decision-making table.

It’s important that we be clear here about the weight, indeed the direct point, of Matt’s words as he further defined inclusion. Per Matt, inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons in the church means that they must have a seat at the decision-making table. Leading with such persons

in mind does not mean leading them to Christ for repentance, but rather leading so as to affirm their “journey” with God pertinent to their sexuality (a point we’re coming to). Matt stated, “It’s hard to say you value...LGBTQ people if you don’t value their perspective.” Not only that, but, according to Matt, we (the church) benefit from having different voices and different perspectives at the table. Now, while in the broadest sense diverse voices and perspectives certainly help a church, such is not the case when they rise against the Word of God and the holiness of God. The church does not benefit from arguments and lofty opinions raised against our Creator (2 Cor. 10:5). Those who advocate – by example or by words – an LGBTQ+ lifestyle do so contrary to God and his Word. Inasmuch as they do this from a position of leadership, they prey on Jesus’ flock. The church is not helped when those at the decision-making table – its leaders – are “fierce wolves” in “sheep’s clothing” who speak “twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30, Matthew 7:15).

Minimizing LGBTQ+

In order for Matt’s case regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion to work, it was necessary for him to downplay the Bible’s clear teaching on sexual ethics. He did so for the last fifteen minutes or so of his presentation. We found this to be the most confused portion of Matt’s talk, and thus it is somewhat difficult to summarize and assess. Here’s what we understood Matt to say:

- First, the matter of LGBTQ+ inclusion is a source of “confusion, tension, for a lot of people.” Therefore, we, the church, need guidance, because a “lot of people think a lot of different things.” The conversation about LGBTQ+ inclusion needs to happen because, as Matt states, two facts are true: 1) “A lot of damage has been done to a lot of people because churches have made terrible mistakes in this area”; 2) “...anybody, no matter where they are on this, can agree, that what churches have done in the past...has not worked.”

Our Response: Scripture is neither unclear nor confused when it comes to sexual ethics; the ethics of holiness. Our culture is confused, and thus churches that listen to culture and not the Bible may be confused, but Scripture is not. Matt posits a strawman realm of confusion and tension in order to (it seems to us) then set himself up as the one who brings clarity. He compounds the strawman technique by further positing an unspecified group, “anybody,” who will agree with him that churches are to blame for damaging people with past bungled and ineffective actions related to LGBTQ+ matters. In essence, we hear Matt saying, “Here is this confused issue, now listen as I bring ‘factual’ clarity.” Nowhere in what follows does Matt preach from God’s Word. Instead, he creates a false sense of confusion that does not exist in Scripture, uses assumption to gain sympathy for his position, and then proceeds to minimize the sin involved with an LGBTQ+ lifestyle and worldview.

- Second, everyone has “issues” with the biblical definition of “inbounds” sexuality (i.e. one married man with one married woman), because we’re all filled with “out of

bounds” desires. Therefore, we all exist in “tension” with the Bible’s very small “bulls-eye” target (Matt’s image) for sexual holiness. In fact, if we could offer an edit to Scripture, if we could change something about what the Bible says, it would be in this area of godly sexuality.

Our Response: As sinners, we are totally depraved apart from Christ. That means sin attaches itself to every aspect of our personhood, including our sexuality. But, by his grace, through our faith in Christ, God also redeems every aspect of our personhood. While we still wrestle with unholy sexual desires, while we still stumble on the way, we need not be controlled by sin. A Christian can, and should, *love* God’s “one-married man with his wife” bulls-eye target.

We see Matt’s confused treatment of the Bible’s sexual ethic as an attempt to relativize issues of sin. If the sin of an LGBTQ+ lifestyle is no different than any other sexual sin, then why wouldn’t we include such persons in the life of the church? Of course, this suggestion totally ignores the fact that Paul condemns *any* expression of unrepentant sexual immorality in the life of a confessing believer. It also ignores that the LGBTQ+ lifestyle is a high-handed affront to God; one which stands as the climactic result of God abandoning humanity to the fullness of its rebellious inclinations (see Romans 1:26ff). By relativizing LGBTQ+ sin, Matt sought to do an end-run around the Bible’s sexual ethic, while concurrently ignoring the weight of Paul’s words to the church in Rome.

- Third, God intends the “tension” in our sexuality vis-à-vis Scripture to bring us to him. As Matt put it, “Every time we seek intimacy, God is unavoidable...I think that God does not want anyone to keep their sexual life and their spiritual life separate...Everyone has to figure out how God and sex works in their life.”

Our Response: Matt is right if he understands God’s glory as the great end of sexual intimacy between a man and his wife. In their intimacy, a married couple is supposed to know something more, something deeper, of God’s love for them. Certainly, God intends no part of our lives to be lived independent of our life with him. These things are true. Unfortunately, the clear articulation of such truths did not seem to be Matt’s goal, nor the effect of his words.

Matt described our “tension” with the Bible’s view of sexuality as God’s instrument to bring us to him so that we can “figure out how God and sex works” in our life. The problem here is at least twofold. First, Matt avoided using the word “sin,” preferring “tensions” instead. And yet, any deviation between one’s sexual desires and actions and the Bible’s sexual ethic is simply sin. Sin calls for confession and repentance, predicated on Jesus’ atoning work at the cross. Matt spoke of “tension” and not “sin,” which means he therefore could not speak of repentance. Without repentance, in what sense can a person come to God for healing amidst sexual brokenness? Second, Matt’s statement, “Everyone has to figure out how God and sex works in their life,” seems to envision a post-modern, individualistic, relativistic quest for a sexuality that works for me; one that God and I agree on together. My personal sexual ethic might

be the Bible's "bulls-eye," or it might not be, all depending on the journey I've walked with God. If this is not what Matt meant, then he failed to communicate clearly as a faithful preacher and teacher of God's Word.

- Fourth, we're all on a long, sometimes painful journey to figure out how God and sex fit together in our lives. The point is the journey, and everyone needs a safe place in which to travel. The church should be that place. Therefore, the church must welcome everyone, celebrating their journey and giving them a "home."

Our Response: Again, Matt's view of sexuality is not the Bible's objective standard of holiness, but instead a self-referential matter of "journey" to discover how "God and sex fit together." Certainly, it is appropriate to speak of the sanctification process as a "journey" with Jesus, but nowhere does Scripture depict our obedience to God's sexual ethic as a "journey." Is the church supposed to be a safe place in which to travel, a place to call "home"? Yes it is, inasmuch as someone is actually following Jesus, having already been made a child of his Father in heaven. But, we must emphasize, such people are marked both by the confession of sin, and by active repentance. They're marked by a concern for God's commandments, his character, and by a desire to conform their lives to the likeness of God's Son, Jesus. For such persons, the LGBTQ+ lifestyle is something to reject and labor against, not something to explore or indulge with a "journey."

We believe Matt's language regarding a journey with God was again intended to obfuscate the sin of an LGBTQ+ lifestyle. By relativizing this matter as simply part of how some people experience the Christian life, Matt was then able to argue for the unquestioning, uncritical inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons in the life of the church. It's important to remember here what LGBTQ+ inclusion means for Matt. It means that such persons receive a consequential voice, even a leadership voice, in how Jesus' church functions.

The Subtle Manipulation

At multiple points in Matt's sermon, we noted what we can only term "subtle manipulation." Whether or not this was a conscious effort on Matt's part, we're not in a position to assess. Note the following examples of manipulation that we observed:

- During his discussion of outsiders and insiders, Matt stated that we as Christians must lead into what's right and not cave before what's wrong. We can't be exclusive because of peer pressure. He quoted James 2:8-9: "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors." Notice the implication here. If you don't agree with Matt's characterization of outsiders and insiders, based on a secular model of "inclusion," then you stand against Christianity itself. If you believe, with Scripture, that an

LGBTQ+ lifestyle is contrary to faith in Christ, and thus contrary to being “inside” the church, then, in Matt’s model, you’re like Peter in Galatians 2. You’re someone who needs to be rebuked, and then you need to “grow.”

- On one occasion in this sermon, Matt made a statement that we think was repeated from earlier in the series: “If the Gospel is for you, then I believe the church should be for you too.” This is the sort of statement that sounds good on the outside, and thus sounds intimidating to disagree with, especially when it includes the pastoral hook, “I believe” (which we address below). What Matt did not address, anywhere in his sermon, is that Gospel faith means *repentance*. To call on Jesus in truth is to call on him as a sinner repenting of sin. If that is your response to the Gospel, then yes, Jesus’ church is for you! But, if you want Jesus without repentance, then you don’t really want the Gospel, and thus the church is not your home.
- On multiple occasions Matt used phrases like “I think,” or “This is what I believe.” He did so as one ostensibly preaching from the front, in a position of pastoral authority and trust. By doing this, Matt set up an implicit, threatening dilemma for the people of SCBC. Those who disagreed with what he said necessarily found themselves in disagreement with him personally, with their pastor, with a man they view as holding spiritual authority. Who wants to be in such a position? Of course, Matt had no right to create this dilemma in the first place. The charge of an under-shepherd among Jesus’ flock is not to lead according to his own thoughts or even “beliefs” per se, but according to God’s Word.⁵ Everything a preaching pastor says must flow from Scripture, especially when it is said with binding authority on a local congregation. While it is not always inappropriate for a pastor to speak of what he “thinks,” or “believes,” instances of doing so should come in the likeness of Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 7:6-7, 12. Matt did not bring the people of SCBC into a robust encounter with God’s Word, but into a robust encounter with himself. This we consider a misuse of spiritual authority.
- Finally, Matt spoke about the work of inclusion as a long process that necessitates growth from everyone. He asserted that “God’s going to have to stretch all of us a little bit if we’re really going to move toward him in this,” and asked, “Are you ready to stretch?” This we call a “disarm and shame” maneuver. By speaking of a “long process,” Matt downplayed the radical departure from biblical fidelity currently underway at SCBC. By speaking of growth and asking, “Are you ready to stretch,” he implicitly shamed those who disagreed with him, suggesting that such persons are anti-growth and hidebound. If Matt were leading in a biblical direction, then perhaps a little bit of godly shame might be justified. In this case, we deplore the effort to inappropriately shame Jesus’ sheep.

⁵ Of course, any faithful pastor must believe what God’s Word says.

How Should We Respond to LBGTQ?

Before we turn to closing thoughts, let us note, briefly, the importance of welcoming LBGTQ+ persons into an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. We want our church services to be instances of worship where lost sinners can be found by the shepherd who seeks them. As the hymn goes, we too once were lost, but now have been found (1 Cor. 6:11). We too once were blind, but now we see. All of this has happened, not through anything good in us, but only by God's amazing grace! We want our homes, our lives, and our corporate worship to be places where sinners of every sort meet Jesus.

Affirming the above, we insist that welcome does not mean condonation. Welcome does not mean downplaying the direct and dire words of Scripture. Welcome does not mean embracing an unrepentant LBGTQ+ person as a fellow traveler in the context of the church. To do such things is not to truly welcome and love a sinner. Rather, it is only to deceive them all the more. God forbid that we become liars in the name of Jesus!

A Warning for a Church That Countenances Evil

We close with an open statement of our deep concern for SCBC, and a warning from Scripture. We're concerned that SCBC, apparently following Matt Roden, is rapidly departing from a faithful adherence to God's Word. Specifically, we're concerned that the church is rapidly setting aside Scripture's sexual ethic in order to adopt a worldly replacement. If this is where SCBC lands, it will only come as the next catastrophic step in a line of compromise. A church doesn't arrive at such a position without first surrendering other convictions; like a commitment to the inerrancy, infallibility, and authority of the Bible; like God's perspective on gender and gender roles in the church and family; like the centrality of faithful expository preaching in the life of the church, and so on. Ominously, we observe that compromise on biblical sexuality goes hand-in-hand with a departure from the Gospel itself. SCBC cannot affirm the LBGTQ+ lifestyle and worldview and expect to remain faithful to the Gospel.

Finally, we think it good to end with warning from Scripture, namely words of Jesus in Revelation 2 and 3. We urge SCBC to heed the way Jesus addresses the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira, whom he charges with countenancing sexual immorality in their midst. We urge SCBC to heed Jesus' words to the churches in Ephesus and Sardis: "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent...Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you" (Revelation 2:5; 3:2-3).

We pray that SCBC will not continue down the road we fear it has taken.