

# BIBLICAL CONVICTIONS

a firm grip on biblical truth | an open hand toward the people around us

## RESOURCES

- *Drawing Doctrinal Lines: Where? and How? and A Look at our Essentials* by Dr. Michael Andrus
- *Life's Biggest Questions: What the Bible Says about the Things That Matter Most* by Dr. Erik Thoennes
- *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues and Conversion, Culture and Cognitive categories* by Dr. Paul Hiebert
- *Evangelical Convictions: A Theological Exposition of the Statement of Faith of the EFCA* by the EFCA Spiritual Heritage Committee

## GOALS OF THIS DISCUSSION

- Reflect Jesus' deep commitment to truth and expansive love for people
- Help develop a framework for forming biblical convictions
- Help develop wisdom on how to carry our biblical convictions in different settings
- Discuss how to embrace and proclaim our biblical convictions in different situations

## GETTING STARTED

- What do you believe are our "most important" Christian beliefs?
- What do you believe are our "least important" Christian beliefs?
- How do we distinguish between more important and less important Christian beliefs?

## FORMING BIBLICAL CONVICTIONS

- We need to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials.
- We should try to use objective criteria rather than subjective criteria.
- We must be committed to grace and truth as we establish core convictions.
- We ought to be humble, this is harder than it looks 😊.

## CATEGORIES FOR BIBLICAL CONVICTIONS

- **Absolutes (or Dogma)** are the core, essential beliefs of the Christian faith.
- **Convictions (or Doctrine)** are not core beliefs, but rather other central beliefs which impact the health, integrity and effectiveness of the church.
- **Opinions (or Theory)** are non-essential beliefs which are open to debate.
- **Questions (or Speculation)** are non-essential belief of personal interest and curiosity.

## CRITERIA FOR BIBLICAL CONVICTIONS

- **Exegetical Certainty**- How clearly does the Bible teach this belief?
- **Theological Importance**- How important is this belief compared to other Christian beliefs?
- **Biblical Emphasis**- How central is this belief to the Bible's core teaching and storyline?
- **Historical Agreement**- How consistently have Christians at all times and in all places held this belief?

## EXAMPLES

- **Absolutes (or Dogma)**: One God, Creator of all things, The Trinity, The deity of Christ, Jesus' crucifixion, death and resurrection
- **Convictions (or Doctrine)**: The verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture, A Biblical view of human sexuality, God's limitless knowledge, Adam and Eve
- **Opinions (or Theory)**: The mode of baptism, the salvation of infants, and the timing of the rapture.
- **Questions (or Speculation)**: Do animals go to heaven? Will we eat steak in heaven?

## HOLDING BIBLICAL CONVICTIONS

- Our convictions don't change (!), but how they function should change depending on the situation.
- We sometimes need to use our biblical convictions like boundaries, placing them at the edges & being more exclusive.
- At other times, we use these convictions more like values, holding them in the center and being more inclusive.
- The use of either option depends on the situation.
- Both approaches need to be applied, using either approach all the time will make you a legalist or heretic. 😊

## BIBLICAL CONVICTIONS AT THE EDGES

- "Bounded-set": putting biblical convictions at the edge of a ministry, group, event or relationship (also called a *boundary-bounded set*).
- When we put our convictions at the edges, it means that we require strong agreement to belong or participate.
- In these situations, things are generally clearer, less messy, feel safer and are more exclusive.

## BIBLICAL CONVICTIONS AT THE CENTER

- "Centered-set": putting biblical convictions at the center of a ministry, group, event or relationship (also called a *center-bounded set*).
- When we put our convictions at the center, it means that we do not require strong agreement to belong or participate.
- Direction and some level of shared values determine inclusion.
- In these situations, things are generally less confrontational, more open, less unified and more inclusive.

## SHARING EXAMPLES

- When is it good to hold our biblical convictions at the edges?
- When is it good to hold our biblical convictions at the center?
- What are some of the reasons we would choose to put them in one place or the other?

