



Theological Perspectives on Current Societal Issues

NORTHSTAR CHURCH POSITIONS

We are grateful, first of all, for the redemption that we have in Christ Jesus. We are humbled by the challenge of guiding and blessing His church. As leaders of Northstar Church, the Staff and Leadership Board, affirm the following positions.

As is quoted in our Membership Notebook, in the Beliefs section:

At Northstar Church, our theology is based solely on the Word of God, the Bible. We seek to model a lifestyle of obedience to the teachings revealed in Scripture and resist a “head-knowledge” form of Christianity, which only leads to pride and stagnation.

The Membership Materials state our belief in the Bible this way:

The Bible was written by men under the leadership and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Because it is God’s Word, it can be trusted to be thoroughly accurate, reliable, practical and relevant to every generation and to people of all cultures. The first eleven chapters of Genesis which deal with creation, the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, the fall, and the flood are not myth, but accurate history. Both Old and New Testaments are authoritative and instructive, and each is worthy of the believer’s study. The Bible is to be read, studied and meditated upon consistently by all who wish to grow in Christian maturity. It is the basis and guide for all teaching in the church. It sets the behavioral standards for all who name the name of Christ.

In addition to the above statement, it should be noted that the Bible is our guide, and we embrace its teachings in faith as we apply those teachings to a culture that many times disagrees with them. We seek to practice the best methods of interpreting scriptural teachings. In addition to sound exposition of doctrine, we seek to understand the most loving way to *apply* and *communicate* scriptural truth as to be obedient to Ephesians 4.15-16:

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Our hope is to glorify God by making much of His Word and assist in the growth of His church by bringing our members to spiritual maturity and our community to trust in Christ alone for salvation.

We understand that there are other churches – a few who may even be Southern Baptist like us – who may interpret the following areas differently. It is not our wish to alienate, only to define our perspective in a loving, biblically-based manner, so that each current member and all future members of Northstar will be informed about the positions we take on the following societal issues.

A. Women’s roles in church leadership

Women have been and always will be an integral part in the life of the church. Northstar has a history of

encouraging and equipping women in the church's ministry. The Bible is very specific about certain leadership roles in the church and generic about others, and we want to explain those roles in this brief paper.

This paper is not intended to be an exhaustive explanation of Northstar's position. There are countless resources available, and they have been researched to help gain perspective and understanding on this topic. This paper is a summary of that research.

It's also important to note that this is a position about gender *roles* in church leadership. This is not a position about gender *equality*. The Bible is very clear, and Northstar believes, that all people, regardless of gender, are created equal.

Lead Pastor and Overseers (Leadership Board):

Northstar Church does not believe women have been given the authority to be lead pastors or overseers (Leadership Board) of the church based on the study of the following scriptures:

1 Corinthians 14:33-36 (ESV)

For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?

1 Timothy 2:11-14 (ESV)

Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 (ESV)

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

Titus 1:5-9 (ESV)

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

We understand that some would interpret the above verses as applying only in past cultural situations. However, we believe that it's clear the positions above were not based on cultural expectations but on the unique nature of men and women at Creation. The Bible also provides a *pattern* of behavior that we use as an example of how to pattern church leadership. In the New Testament, women were not given the authority to lead the church. They were not selected as Jesus' first disciples. The pattern of the first church (and in the Old Testament) demonstrates that although Christianity was radically counter-cultural for its day, it did not practice or place women into positions of spiritual authority.

Ministry Team Leaders (Deacons):

Northstar Church does support women as Ministry Team Leaders (or deacons as described in the Bible). Scripturally, deacons supported the Apostles and Overseers of the early church in various roles. Northstar Church supports this same structure and bases the requirements of a Ministry Team Leader on the following scripture:

1 Timothy 3:8-13 (ESV)

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

There is a pattern of behavior in the Bible that supports having *mostly* men in this role, but there are biblical examples of women acting in this role (Phoebe in Romans 16:1; 1 Timothy 3:11 could be interpreted as referring to women deacons). There are no scriptures that prohibit women acting as deacons as outlined in Timothy 3:8-13 noted above. Please note, Northstar Church's use of the term deacon and Ministry Team leader is interchangeable. The role of the Ministry Team is described in our Membership Notebook, in the Structure section.

The Manner of Leadership

We understand that such an articulation of theological belief may alarm some of those considering membership at Northstar. We think it necessary to state that male spiritual authority in no way is to be practiced in a belittling or abusive nature. Scripture is very clear that leadership is to be ruled by love, and that the best leaders are also servants. 1 Peter 5:1-4 captures this holy stewardship of a leader well:

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Good Company

If you're interested in knowing other churches or Christian leaders and pastors that adopt a similar theological position about women in leadership in the church, we offer this list of names and resources for your information.

- The Village Church, Pastor Matt Chandler
- Bethlehem Baptist Church, Pastor John Piper
- Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Pastor Tim Keller
- Stonebriar Community Church, Pastor Chuck Swindoll
- The Church at Brook Hills, David Platt

Finally, the Baptist Faith and Message of the Southern Baptist Convention (of which Northstar is a member) states:

“While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.”