

# Faithbridge Convictions, Persuasions, and Opinions

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## *Doctrinal Guidelines for Prospective Leaders and Staff Members*

Prayerfully review the following doctrine guideline with the understanding that these beliefs and issues have varying levels of importance to each person. Faithbridge seeks team members who:

- passionately share the same belief convictions, and
- are comfortable ministering alongside others who may or may not share the exact same belief persuasions or opinions.

We believe if our differences involve convictions, we should not attempt ministering together. But we are comfortable with your holding differing persuasions and opinions if you can model, teach, and promote Faithbridge's positions without feeling your integrity is compromised.

### **1. CONVICTIONS – Core Christian beliefs that we believe are the essence of Christianity.**

- ❑ **Authority of Scripture** — The sole basis of our beliefs is the Bible, the 66 canonical books of the Old and New Testaments. The Bible is the Word of God, fully true; our final authority in all matters of faith, practice, and lifestyle. (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20–21)
- ❑ **God** — There is One true God who exists eternally in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, who are of one substance and equal in power and glory. (Gen. 1:1, 26; Matt. 28:19; John 1:1; Rom. 1:20; Eph. 4:5; 2 Cor. 13:14)
- ❑ **Deity of Christ** — Jesus Christ is 100% God and yet 100% man, born of the virgin Mary. (Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13)
- ❑ **Substitutionary Atonement** — Though all have sinned and deserve eternal separation from God, Jesus Christ died on the cross as our substitute—taking upon Himself the penalty for our sins. (Isa. 53; Rom. 3:23–26; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 2:2)
- ❑ **Resurrection of Christ** — On the third day Jesus rose from the dead in the body which had been laid in the tomb, defeating sin and death. (Matt. 28:6; 1 Cor. 15:4–9, 14)
- ❑ **Salvation by Grace through Faith** — A person can be saved from the condition of sin and spiritual death only by the grace of God, when that person experiences the free gift of new birth by placing his or her personal faith in Jesus Christ. (John 3:3, 16; Rom. 10:9; Eph. 2:8, 9)
- ❑ **Second Coming of Christ** — Jesus Christ will return someday, at a date undisclosed by Scripture, to judge the living and the dead. Those who have received the gift of salvation will spend eternity with Christ. Those who have rejected the gift of salvation will be condemned to eternal separation from God. (Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:16–17)

## 2. PERSUASIONS – Beliefs about which we have persuasions, though recognizing many biblical Christians have drawn different conclusions.

- ❑ **Predestination** — All have sinned and cannot save themselves. Jesus died for all, and God is drawing all people to Himself. Before the foundation of the world, God—who stands outside our continuum of time—foreknew who would place their faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. His foreknowledge, though, does not logically necessitate His predestinated salvation of certain individuals. God has, indeed, predetermined that the Church will be saved (corporate election), but a person becomes a part of the Church through responding to His wooing, prevenient grace and choosing to place his or her faith in Jesus Christ.
- ❑ **Assurance of Salvation** — Scripture makes clear that it is the privilege of all Christian believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation from the very moment in which they trust Christ as their Savior, and thereafter. This assurance is not based upon any kind of merit but is produced by the witness of the Holy Spirit who confirms in the believer the testimony of God in His written Word (Rom. 8:15–16; 1 John 2:3–6, 3:24, 5:11–12).
- ❑ **Tongues** — The supernatural spiritual gifts still exist today. Speaking in tongues is a valid gift for the Church today and should operate under the boundaries of 1 Corinthians 14. One such boundary: speaking or praying in tongues confuses unbelievers attending a corporate worship service (1 Cor. 14:23–25) and should therefore be expressed in believers' settings such as like-hearted prayer groups and personal prayer times. Speaking in tongues may accompany being filled with the Holy Spirit but is not "the sign" that a person is filled with the Holy Spirit.
- ❑ **Baptism** — We believe water baptism is a sacrament to be observed by the Church today, a means by which we experience God's grace tangibly, though not a requisite to salvation or church membership. Faithbridge offers to those who have placed their faith in Christ any of three modes of water baptism practiced throughout Church history: immersion, pouring, and sprinkling. Faithbridge offers either infant dedication or infant baptism, leaving that decision to parents. Any prior baptism in a Christian church, including infant baptism, is acceptable, although we have a strong preference for celebrating believer's baptism.
- ❑ **Communion** — We believe the Lord's Supper is a sacrament to be observed by the Church today, a way we experience God's grace tangibly, though not a requisite to salvation or church membership. We believe that Communion is an outward sign or symbol of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ. While we do not believe that the bread and juice literally turn into the actual flesh and blood of Christ, we do believe that in Communion we experience the very real presence and grace of Jesus Christ with us.
- ❑ **Spiritual Warfare** — Satan and demons exist. They were defeated through the cross but will not be destroyed until the Second Coming. Believers have authority in Jesus' name over demonic powers. Believers may be oppressed by demons but not possessed. Prayer is essential for the Church.
- ❑ **Women in Ministry** — God has established authority in the home based on gender, but He has established authority in the Church based on office. God does call and equip women for pastoral ministry offices.

- **Church Government** — Several different church government configurations can fulfill the Bible’s description of church government. The Faithbridge Staff drives ministry decisions at Faithbridge, with the Senior Pastor serving as presiding elder. The Council of Lay Elders serves in an advisory and accountability role, primarily to the Senior Pastor.
- **Church Membership & Leadership** — All persons who commit to uphold these beliefs and pledge to live according to the *Membership Covenant* are welcome to be an active part of the vibrant community and body of Christ at Faithbridge. Potential leaders must be known for a period of time sufficient for two or more other leaders to affirm they are living by their membership commitment (I Tim. 3:1–13; Eph. 4).

**3. OPINIONS – Topics about which we welcome opinions about, but would not even argue for, such as:**

- What songs or instruments should be used in public worship services.
- Which Bible translation is best for sermons or devotions.
- Various biblical end times scenarios and timelines interpretations.

# Faithbridge's Biblically Guided Positions on Current Social Issues

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Beneath is a list of many of today's most pressing social issues, followed by statements written with our best effort to balance the grace and truth which defined Jesus Christ our Lord (John 1:14; 17), and built from our conviction that God's Word is our ultimate authority:

We ask that you keep these three principles in mind as you read through this list:

1. We are aware that the Church, historically and globally, has not always stewarded well the balance of biblical truth with loving grace and acceptance in all areas.
2. We believe peace is found in the truth of the Gospel, which calls us to keep our eyes on Jesus and His outrageous love, forgiveness, and extension of grace to all who would believe in Him.
3. These positions are not ranked in importance, they are merely our best effort at applying God's authoritative Word to our culture's current most frequently asked questions.

Please read these carefully and indicate any statements you cannot support with integrity to discuss with a Faithbridge staff leader.

- ❑ **Alcohol** — Scripture never condemns the non-intoxicating consumption of alcohol; however, it does condemn drunkenness (see Luke 21:34; Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:18; 1 Pet. 4:3). Inappropriately used, alcohol can damage one's health, safety, job, and relationships.

As followers of Christ, we must ensure that the exercise of our freedom to consume alcohol never becomes "a stumbling block to the weak" (1 Cor. 8:9), including those with a propensity towards intoxication, victims of alcohol-related tragedies, relatives of alcoholics, children and under-age students, and pre-Christian skeptics who assume alcohol is forbidden and seek to find faults in Christians. Our personal preferences are always of secondary concern to the reputation of Christ, since we have been crucified with Christ and thus no longer live, but rather, live by and through Christ indwelling in us (Gal. 2:20).

Faithbridgers must do everything possible to create a safe place for all people, while also preventing potential legal and reputational controversies; therefore, we choose to abstain from serving or consuming alcohol at all Faithbridge-related functions, living by the spirit of the law over the letter of the law, when in doubt.

- ❑ **Identity & Gender** — We believe, as children of God, our identity and value are found in our relationship with Jesus. We reject social status, marital status, sin struggle, sexuality, or even our gender as the ultimate definition or summation of our identity (Gal. 3:28). All these things can have an undue grip on our heart and sense of identity. Instead, we are called to holiness and the pursuit of intimacy and communion with God the Father through the work of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe God created the distinction of gender between male and female within His good design, with each gender serving unique purposes within creation (Gen. 1:27–30). We recognize that, culturally, the topics of sexuality and gender are uniquely intertwined, and present deep and complex issues. In pursuit of conforming ourselves to God's design, we believe first our identity should conform and cling to who we are in Christ, and second our biological gender is given to us by God to steward for God's purposes.

- **Sanctity of Life** — We believe life is a gift from God and must always be regarded as sacred (Gen. 1:27). From conception to death, the beginning and the ending of life are the God-given boundaries of human existence (Job 14:5). Every person, including preborn children, elderly individuals, those with special needs and others marginalized by society, possesses inherent dignity and immeasurable worth.
  - **Abortion** — We believe the life inside a mother’s womb is a living person and therefore, we believe the act of abortion is incongruent with God’s will (Ps. 139:13–16; Jer. 1:4, 5; Ex. 20:13). We implore anyone considering abortion to seek counsel and help with God-honoring alternatives from Faithbridge and our network of support partners. At the same time, ours is not a message of guilt for past choices, but of grace—knowing God offers full forgiveness to anyone who repents of sin and turns to Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7; Col. 2:13–15)—and we seek to embrace, welcome and support each person in his or her spiritual and emotional healing at Faithbridge.
  - **Suicide** — We believe suicide is not the way a human life should end and is incongruent with God’s will (Gen. 9:6; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20). Often the result of untreated depression and/or pain and suffering, we strongly appeal to anyone contemplating suicide to seek pastoral, medical, and therapeutic support. Suicide is not “victimless,” and we consider the stigma that so often falls on surviving family and friends unjust. We lovingly embrace surviving family members and encourage them to find community, support and emotional healing in the church. We affirm nothing, including suicide, separates us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38, 39) and is not in and of itself an “unforgivable sin.”
- **Sexuality, Singleness, and Marriage** — In a culture that often considers seeking pleasure its highest priority, we believe as Christ-followers we must instead put expression of sexuality in its proper perspective—a gift that should be enjoyed and honored within God’s design, not as an essential element of happiness or fulfillment.

We are reminded that “none are without sin” and “all have fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Our hearts break for all who are challenged and struggle in pursuit of God’s call to sexual purity. No matter the struggle, we welcome the opportunity to walk alongside everyone in pursuit of Christ together.

All are welcome to attend Faithbridge and to participate in activities and ministries within the church, just as all are welcome to the free gift of grace found in Christ.

However, after repenting of sin and turning to Christ, we lovingly insist that any believers actively behaving sexually outside of God’s design wait for a period sufficient to establish a pattern of freedom and victory prior to being a candidate for a leadership role at Faithbridge (1 Tim 3:16).

- **Sex** — We believe sex within God’s design is always a mirror of His oneness involving the whole person (physical and spiritual), uniting, in marriage, one man and one woman into “one flesh” (Eph. 5:31). We believe sexual expression is a gift from God given to man and woman in marriage—and only them—to solidify and enhance their covenant relationship (Eph. 5:21). We believe violation of the marriage covenant and sexual expression outside its bounds stand in contrast to God’s design and is thus sinful. Examples of these include, but are not limited to, adultery, polygamy, polyamory, pornography, homosexuality, co-habitation, sex before marriage, or any sexual relationship where one or both partners are exploitative or abusive (Ex. 20:14; Matt. 5:27, 28; Rom. 1:26, 27; 1 Cor. 6:9–13; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3).

- **Singleness** — We believe “singleness” is a gift and an integral part of God’s design within the body of Christ (1 Cor. 7:7–8). We reject that singleness is simply a “season” with the ultimate goal of marriage. We believe God has called all believers, whether single or married, to be agents of His redemptive purposes in the world.
- **Marriage** — We believe marriage is a lifelong, exclusive, and interdependent relationship between a man and a woman. Scripture offers healthy guidelines for a lifelong, loving, monogamous marriage between a man and a woman in terms of procreation, godly intimacy, the nurture of children, and sexual activity (Gen. 1:27, 28; Gen. 2:18; Mal. 2:15; 1 Cor. 7:2).
- **Divorce** — We believe God loves every divorced person wholly and fully, as do we. We recognize that divorce is a reality, as evidenced by sin and brokenness. Because “God hates divorce” (Mal. 2:16) for the pain and division it so often causes, we strongly encourage biblical reconciliation and restoration within marriage (presuming neither person has remarried and/or that there is no threat to someone’s health or safety), and accordingly, we offer a range of marriage-strengthening ministries in hopes that no marriage ends in divorce. We recognize that the high frequency of divorce affects numerous persons in the church, and thus we also offer and encourage involvement in our divorce-recovery ministries. Neither divorce nor remarriage serves as single qualifying or disqualifying issue for leadership in the church. We work to understand the fuller picture of a person’s story, while guiding individuals into a lifestyle consistent with God’s Word (Matt. 5:27–32; Matt. 19:3–9; 1 Cor. 7:10–16).
- **Homosexuality** — We believe God loves all people (John 3:16), including those who are sexually attracted, oriented and/or identify themselves in a sexual lifestyle outside of God’s original design. Though we recognize the practice of homosexuality as sin, we emphasize grace, love, and the sacred worth of all persons in the midst of truth. We also recognize that the temptation of same-sex attraction is not in and of itself a sin (James 1:13–15).

I would like to discuss the following doctrinal issues:

I can uphold and support these positions with integrity.

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**Name**
**Date**