



## ON PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM ABUSE

June 2007

WHEREAS, The Bible stresses the protection of and care for children, as evidenced by: its condemnation of the ancient pagan practice of child sacrifice (Leviticus 20:1-7; Ezekiel 16:20-21); its special regard for orphans in the nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 24, 26); and the teaching of Jesus, who welcomed and valued little children (Matthew 18:1-5; 19:14); and

WHEREAS, Faithful Christians throughout history have risen to the defense of children, as seen in the Early Church's protest of the practice of "child exposure"—in which unwanted infants were abandoned and left to die; the work of nineteenth-century Christians such as Lord Shaftesbury and others, who campaigned against child slavery and enacted child labor laws; and the diligence of those who defend the right to life of unborn children today; and

WHEREAS, Violent physical and sexual crimes against children have reached alarming levels in our nation, thus showing child abuse to be a leading issue requiring the urgent response of God's people; and

WHEREAS, This abuse has occurred too often in churches and homes—which ought to be places of shelter and safety—and it has happened at the hands of family, educators, ordained ministers, and ministry workers—who ought to be trusted persons of authority; and

WHEREAS, The Southern Baptist Convention in 2002: called Southern Baptists to practice integrity and fidelity to God; urged accountability among spiritual leaders to the highest standards of Christian moral practice; urged seminaries and related educational institutions to emphasize ministerial integrity; encouraged religious bodies to rid their ranks of predatory ministers; called on civil authorities to punish to the fullest extent of the law sexual abuse among clergy and counselors; called on our churches to discipline those guilty of any sexual abuse as well as to cooperate with civil authorities in the prosecution of those cases; and urged our churches to offer support, compassion, and biblical counseling to victims and their families; and

WHEREAS, LifeWay Christian Resources and many state conventions offer extensive resources designed to assist churches in addressing this issue; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in San Antonio, Texas, June 12-13, 2007, express our deep level of moral outrage and concern at any instance of child victimization; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we implore Southern Baptist churches to utilize materials from LifeWay Christian Resources and state conventions and other relevant research that help churches prevent child abuse; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we strongly recommend that Southern Baptist churches and Convention entities respond to any suspicions or allegations of child abuse in a timely and forthright manner; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge Southern Baptist churches and Convention entities to exercise moral stewardship by observing responsible employment practices, including performing criminal background checks on all ministers, employees, and volunteers; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we renounce individuals who commit heinous acts against children; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we renounce individuals, churches, or other religious bodies that cover up, ignore, or otherwise contribute to or condone the abuse of children; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we pray for righteousness and justice to prevail in our land and intercede on behalf of victimized children, asking God to heal their deep emotional and physical wounds, grow them into mature and healthy adults, and stop the cycle of abuse from repeating itself in another generation.

San Antonio, TX

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