

Real Life Ministries Texas Statement of Faith

GOD

God is self-existent, and by nature, He is eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, and omnipresent. God exists in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Godhead is in agreement with the role of each. These three are co-equal and are one God, and therefore, God is by nature a relational God who enjoys loving fellowship within the Godhead, and who extends a loving relationship to us through faith in Jesus Christ and in unity with the Holy Spirit.

Supportive Scripture: Genesis 1:1, 26-27; 3:22; Deuteronomy 6:4; Job 38, 39, & 40; Psalm 90:2, 139:1-4, 7-10; Isaiah 40:13-17, 45:18; Matthew 19:26, 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2

FATHER

Jesus Christ did not have a biological human father. God is His Father, and Jesus was born of a virgin mother by the power of the Holy Spirit, yet still, all three exist as one God. The Fatherhood of God is eternal; therefore, Father and Son have always existed in a love relationship. God revealed Himself as Father in both Old and New Testaments. God adopts believers in Jesus Christ into a relationship with Him as their Father. Through Christ, believers have the privilege of being heirs to God's glory. Father God actively prunes and disciplines believers so they may grow in character, wisdom, and knowledge of Him and bear the fruit of Christlikeness.

Supportive Scripture: John 15:1-4; Deuteronomy 32:6; Isaiah 9:6, 63:16; John 20:17; Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:6

JESUS

Jesus Christ is the Son of God and He is God. He is coequal with the Father and Holy Spirit. Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on the cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven's glory and will return again to claim His church.

Supportive Scripture: Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 1:22-23; John 1:1-5; 8:58; 14:10-30; Acts 1:9-11; Romans 1:3-4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Colossians 1:15-23; 1 Timothy 6:14-15; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 4:14-15; Revelation 1:8

HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is coequal with the Father and the Son as God. He is present in the world to make all people aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He inspired and guided the Prophets and Apostles with the revelation of Scripture. He also dwells in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He gives Christians the power to grow in Christlikeness, understand spiritual truth, and serve the church. As Christians, we seek to live under the Holy Spirit's control daily.

Supportive Scripture: Genesis 1:1-2; Psalm 51:10-12; John 14:16-17, 16:7-13, 17; Acts 1:8; Romans 5:5; I Corinthians 2:12; 3:16; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 1:13, 5:18; 2 Peter 1:19-21

MANKIND

People are made in the image of God, to be like Him in character. Although every person has tremendous potential for good, all of us are marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called "sin." This attitude separates people from God and causes many problems in life. To put this simply, this attitude we have can be described as our "sin nature". Yet, we are not separated from God because of the existence of sin nature, but rather, because we give into it and choose to sin.

Supportive Scripture: Genesis 1:27; Genesis 3; Psalms 8:3-6; Isaiah 53:6; Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 3:23

SALVATION

Salvation is God's free gift to us, but we must accept it. We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ and God's offer of forgiveness can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. When we turn from our self-ruled life and turn to Jesus in faith, we are saved. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ as Lord of their life. This is evidenced by repentance, confession, baptism by immersion, and a life committed to His service.

Supportive Scripture: John 1:12, 14:6; Romans 5:1, 6:23; Galatians 3:26; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5

BIBLE

The Bible is God's Word to us. It was written by human authors, under the

supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it is the truth without error. The Bible is infallible, inerrant, and absolute truth. We listen and obey the truth and the instruction it provides.

Supportive Scripture: Psalms 12:6, 119:105, 160; Proverbs 30:5; 2 Timothy 1:13, 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21

ETERNITY

People will either exist eternally separated from God by sin or exist eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separated from God is eternal death in Hell. To be eternally in union with Him is eternal life in Heaven. We believe that Heaven and Hell are real places of eternal existence.

Supportive Scripture: John 3:16, 14:17; Romans 6:23; Romans 8:17-18; 1 Corinthians 2:7-9; Revelation 20:15

BAPTISM

We teach that those who have believed the message of the gospel, repented, and confessed Christ as Lord and Savior will be baptized as an act of obedience in following Jesus. In the book of Acts, people were immediately baptized once they accepted Christ. As a church, we want to respond with the same sense of urgency in a timely act of obedience following a confession of faith. Baptism literally means “to be immersed” and we honor our role in obedience to Christ through the physical act of baptism in water by immersion. Baptism is a picture of death and resurrection. Because we do not believe a baby, or small child, is lost before the age of accountability (the age where they have the ability to know the truth about God, Jesus, and sin), we do not baptize infants (Matthew 18:1-6).

Supportive Scripture: Matthew 28:18-21, Acts 2:37-38, Acts 8:35-39, Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12

THE CHURCH

The church is the body and bride of Christ and also serves as the household of faith. It is a living temple where God dwells in each of His people. We believe that everyone that has been saved by Christ is a member of the greater Christian church. We believe that the church exists throughout the world, and is

witnessed and experienced in local autonomous gatherings of believers.

Supportive Scripture: Ephesians 4:16; Romans 12:4-5; Ephesians 5:24-32; Galatians 6:10; 1 Peter 2:4-5; 1 Corinthians 3:16; Acts 14:23; Matthew 16:16-18; Acts 2:42-47; Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:20-23; 4:3-10; Colossians 3:14-15

THE LEADERSHIP MODEL OF THE CHURCH

Real Life Ministries Texas is a non-denominational Christian church. While recognizing the value of associating and cooperating with other groups of Christians, we believe the local church should be governed by elders who have been chosen from among the members. We have concluded that the Biblical model for church leadership is that Christ is the head of the church, and local elders are responsible for carrying out His will in the local assembly of believers.

Supportive Scripture: Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 5:17; Ephesians 5:23-25; 1 Peter 5:1-4

COMMUNION

Communion at Real Life Ministries Texas is a memorial of the new covenant and a proclamation. It is a sacred event for those who have a vital, biblical relationship with Jesus. We follow Jesus' instruction for communion as in Scripture He defined it: "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:23-25 NIV). We take communion every week in our services.

Supportive Scripture: Matthew 26:26-28; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 11:23-30, 10:16; 1 Peter 2:24; Ephesians 1:7

RELATIONSHIPS

We believe that God created us for relationship—relationship with Him and with one another. We emphasize the greatest commandments, which are to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love others as ourselves. It is by our primary relationship with God, through Jesus, with the Holy Spirit working in us, that love and all Godly fruit are possible. It is by our love for one

another as Christians that people will know we are true disciples of Jesus Christ. We bring glory to God by living our lives in authentic, life-changing relationships, with Him and with one another.

Supportive Scripture: Genesis 2:8; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:34-40; John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 13; 1 John 1:5-7

PRIESTHOOD OF EVERY BELIEVER

God intends for every believer to play a role in the ministry of His church. Though certain roles of leadership may require special qualifications, ministry is not reserved for the “clergy.” Every member is a minister. Ministry is not reserved only for those who are paid or have specialized training, instead is the obligation of every believer. God’s mission is accomplished best when every member of the church spends time and effort in ministry. In keeping with Paul’s words to the Ephesian church, Real Life Ministries Texas endeavors to equip its members to do ministry, and not be fans sitting in the stands.

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13 NIV).

Supportive Scriptures: Ephesians 4:11-13; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-30; 1 Peter 4:10-11

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

God has designed the local church like a physical body, with Jesus Christ as the head. God gifts each of His children in unique and special ways to serve and build up the body. Therefore, spiritual gifts are not for personal benefit or glory, but to bring glory to God, as well as encouraging and building up the church.

No one individual can have all the gifts described in Scripture. We are interdependent with each other; together we are the body of Christ which is a clear demonstration of true diversity. There is no division as we all have equal concerns and need for each other. One is an “eye”, another is a “hand”, another is a “foot”; and some are presentable while other parts are not.

We all must be the part God has designed us to be, if not, the body suffers and becomes ill.

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully” (Romans 12:6-8).

God gives rules in His word for the use of tongues. If someone speaks in a tongue it will be one at a time and there must be an interpreter (1 Corinthians 14:27-28). Also, there must be one who discerns whether what is spoken comes from God (1 John 4:1). It is noteworthy that 1 Corinthians was written to house churches. We are aware that some division can come with reference to the use of “tongues”. To preserve unity in the body of Real Life Ministries Texas, we ask that the gift of speaking in tongues not be exercised in public meetings (services/small groups).

Supportive Scripture: Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Peter 4:7-11

STEWARDSHIP AND GENEROSITY

At Real Life Ministries Texas, we give generously to support the church, the body of Christ, as God’s Word commands. We recognize that giving 10% of our income is defined as a “tithe”, the Biblical starting point of giving to the local church.

But we do not stop there. We believe that our whole lives are a response to God’s grace and love for us. And so, we consider it our privilege and our challenge to live lives of extravagant generosity. We view our entire lives as an offering to the Lord, and so we live our lives in such a way that we are no longer asking the question, “God, how much are you asking me to give?” but rather, “God, how much are you asking me to keep?” In living this way, we seek to honor God through the ultimate sacrifice of our time, gifts, and resources for His Kingdom.

We encourage everyone to live obediently as it pertains to their finances, which

includes tithing. If tithing has not been a part of a church member's life practices we encourage them to explore what God says about finances and step out on a faith journey. We believe that church members can begin by committing to trust Him in this area and take a step of obedience to give faithfully. As we courageously walk with God in this area, we believe God will bring peace to our church members' lives as they grow in this worshipful response to God. Being a part of Real Life Ministries Texas means being committed to following God as He grows and changes us into persons of generosity.

We believe that any giving over 10% is an "offering of gratitude" for the great things God does for us every day. This offering of gratitude is a privilege to give and is in addition to the tithe. We believe that the local church is the storehouse and that church attendees should give their tithe there. Meanwhile, the offering of gratitude may be given at an attendee's discretion to any worthwhile ministry, church or organization. We also recognize that we must be good stewards of our time and our talents—everything we have, as the Lord has blessed us with these things as well. Like any other form of obedience, tithing is a matter of the heart.

Supportive Scripture: Leviticus 27:30; Malachi 3:7-12; Acts 4:32-5:11; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15; Mark 12:43; 2 Samuel 24:24; Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42

THE END TIMES

We believe there will be a literal return of Christ and a judgment day. We also believe there will be a literal rapture (a catching up of the saints). How and when this will happen has been a source of great debate. We believe the details are in God's hands and this is not a salvation issue.

Supportive Scripture: Matthew 12:36; Matthew 24:36; John 5:22, 16:8; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 2 Peter 3:7; Jude 6

ETERNAL SECURITY

We teach that a person is saved by grace through faith. Faith is evidenced by action. There are different perspectives regarding eternal security. Often this issue is recognized by the question, "Can you or can you not lose your salvation?" Both sides of the issue believe you know a tree by its fruit (John 6:44). A person is not lost because they sin, but because they reject Jesus. This has been a long-standing argument between scholars from two different theological camps. The

Armenians believe salvation can be gained and lost. The Calvinists believe once a person is saved he or she can never be lost again. There are great scholars who stand on both sides of this debate and there is Scriptural support for both perspectives. Both believe that a person can be identified as a Christian if there is a change in behavior—fruit. The Holy Spirit produces a changed character over time. In our church, we will encourage those who have given their lives to Christ to grow. If they fall down in their faith we will help them to get back up and continue on with Christ. We believe that Christians can have great confidence in their salvation. The Armenians believe that only a person who has denied their faith in Christ is lost. The Calvinist believes that a person who has denied faith in Christ was never saved to begin with. Again, either way, faith in Christ saves us. Ultimately we have people from both backgrounds in our church and we have decided that this is not a salvation issue.

Supportive Scripture: Luke 8:13&14, John 10:27&28, Ephesians 2:8-10, James 2:14, Romans 1:5

ORDINATION

Ordination through Real Life Ministries Texas is reserved for men who serve as paid ministerial staff for the church. It is overseen and bestowed by the laying on of hands by the elders. Men who have been identified to serve in pastoral positions in a supported staff role are required to complete ordination. Regular participation and leadership in the following sacerdotal duties are required to maintain ordination: Weddings, Funerals, Preaching/Teaching, Baptism, Communion, and Pastoral Counseling.

Real Life Ministries Texas ordains men for ministry under the oversight of our eldership. If a pastor disqualifies himself, his ordination will be removed. If a pastor moves to another church ministry outside the oversight of Real Life Ministries Texas' elders, we will recommend that their ordination continues under the leadership of that church and that they should reissue his certificate of ordination. In certain cases where a para-church ministry is involved ordination will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Supportive Scripture: Acts 13:1-3, 20:26-31; 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 4:14, 5:17, 5:22

MARRIAGE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or

female in His image (Gen. 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological gender is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen. 2:18-25). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman, who are married to each other (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no sexual activity be engaged outside of marriage. We believe that neither the federal government, the state, the church, nor any other individual possesses the authority or jurisdiction to set or alter Scripture's definition of marriage. Therefore, unions or partnerships that do not conform to the Biblical definition of marriage are not acknowledged by Real Life Ministries Texas as marriage.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual behavior, transgenderism, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matt. 15:18-20; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). When we become aware of such practices, within the staff and membership of the church, we will follow the Matthew 18 process to seek repentance, reconciliation, and restoration. Our heart is always to restore people to God and the body of Christ. But if repentance is not attained, employment and or membership will be denied or revoked. Any person who practices such behavior will no longer be eligible for the benefits of membership and/or employment. Therefore, those known to be habitual and unrepentant in the practice of these behaviors will be denied membership as well as revocation of employment, together with the benefits that accrue therefrom.

We believe that to preserve the function and integrity of Real Life Ministries Texas as the local Body of Christ and to provide a Biblical role model to Real Life Ministries Texas' members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Real Life Ministries Texas in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by Real Life Ministries Texas Doctrinal Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Thess. 5:22).

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness,

respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of Real Life Ministries Texas.

Supportive Scripture: Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 2:18-25; 1 Corinthians 6:18, 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4; Matthew 15:18-20, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; Acts 3:19-21; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31

SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image (Genesis 1:26-28). Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life (Psalm 139).

Supportive Scripture: Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 139

COMPLIMENTARIANISM (Gender roles in the Church and Home)

We believe men and women are absolutely equal in essence, dignity, and value and are distinct by divine design. We believe God created two distinct, yet complementary genders for our good, His glory, and to reflect His nature and character to the world. As part of God's created order, men and women are to have different yet complementary roles and responsibilities in the home and church.

We believe that the Biblical Headship as modeled by Christ loving the church applies to the home. Husbands are to love their wives unconditionally and wives are to respect their husbands, both demonstrating Biblical submission and love and sharing equal value in God's design. (Ephesians 5)

We believe as it relates to the church, men and women are both expected to serve and lead; however, the office of Elder/Pastor is reserved for qualified men (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1) Mixed-gender teaching environments are overseen by Elders/Pastors.

Supportive Scripture: Genesis 2:18-25; 1 Corinthians 12:4-32; Galatians 3:28-29; 1 Timothy 2:8-15, Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-7

THE ELDERSHIP MODEL OF THE CHURCH

We believe Christ is the head of the church. We believe the local Church should be governed by a plurality of male elders to oversee the carrying out of His will in the local assembly of believers.

We believe men who have aspired to a Pastoral role and have been confirmed through character and gifting by our existing Eldership and Pastoral staff must go through an ordination process before they are publicly set aside and ordained as Pastors at Real Life Ministries. Ordained Pastors have both the authority and the expectation to perform sacerdotal functions and ministerial services such as Weddings, Funerals, Preaching/Teaching, Baptism, Communion, Shepherding, Disciple-making, Pastoral Counseling, and other ministerial services as needed.

The Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all we believe. For purposes of Real Life Ministries Texas' faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our Eldership is Real Life Ministries Texas' final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.