

ANTALYA EVANGELICAL CHURCH (A/K) REGULATION AND THEOLOGY

OCTOBER 2023

INTRODUCTION

This regulation is a document that explains the structure, order, and statement of faith of the Antalya Evangelical Church (AEC). It is prepared with the aim of ensuring that AEC continues to exist in a structured and regular manner in accordance with the Holy Bible; it explains the order, rules, and functioning of the local church to which the members belong and guides the elder council.

AEC is an independent evangelical church not affiliated with any denomination. Our churches are open to the participation and membership of anyone who adopts the basic doctrines of the Holy Bible, comes from different denominations and groups, and accepts the faith and governance regulations expressed in this regulation. These individuals can also be involved in the services of our churches in different areas. However, brothers and sisters with different views must serve by giving the teachings contained in the general regulation of the church without bringing their own thoughts to the forefront, without creating a discussion over them, and instead of teaching their own thoughts to the community.

This prepared regulation is not the Word of God. It does not possess that kind of authority. However, it is a regulation based on the Word of God and the Protestant denomination. It explains AEC's foundations of faith, form of governance, order, and rules.

2. THE CHURCH

The universal church is the Body and Bride of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:22-32; Revelation 19:7). The universal church is singular and consists of the elect from the first human created until the second coming of Christ. Until the physical resurrection that will occur at Christ's second coming, some members of this universal church will continue to live on earth, while others will be in the presence of God in Heaven. These two groups together form the single universal church. With the second coming of Christ, this physical separation will disappear, and the universal church will live in the presence of God for eternity.

There is no distinction or privilege in the universal church based on ethnic origin, language, race, gender, social status, educational background, etc. (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11). It consists of individuals from every nation, language, and culture. This diversity indicates not the multiplicity but the singularity and richness contained within the universal church.

The visible expression of the universal church on earth are the local churches (Revelation 2). Local churches are numerous due to physical and geographical limitations. Despite gathering in different ethnic origins, languages, and geographical regions, all true local churches belonging to God are members of the same and single universal church.

Local churches can form denominational alliances among themselves. AEC is a member of the Union of Protestant Churches in Turkey and continues to maintain relationships with Protestant churches within Turkey and abroad in mutual respect, love, and harmony.

The purpose and goals of local churches are not political or worldly. In this sense, churches and church administrations are not political administrations.

3. CHURCH MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

OUR MISSION:

In Our Hearts, Around Us, In Our World

To exalt and proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord.

OUR VISION:

With the power of God;

To convey the message of Jesus Christ to those who have never heard it,

To help believers in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength,

To support the spiritual and physical growth of the church,

To equip and nurture individuals in the growing church to serve the church and the community as disciples of Jesus Christ,

To start new churches in regions without a church.

We Aim to Achieve These Goals!

4. CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

The Head, Lord, Owner, King, Leader, Teacher, Shepherd, and God of the universal church, and therefore of all true local churches, is the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:23; 5:23; Colossians 1:18). All administrations are under the authority and power of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ governs His church through His powerful, living, true, and competent Word (the Scriptures), disciplines it, and applies His grace to it through the Holy Spirit. He strengthens His church with the means of grace He has established for it (the Scriptures, Sacraments [Baptism and the Lord's Supper], and prayer).

Jesus Christ is the sole and ultimate Leader of the church. Everyone in the church, whether they hold authority or not, is under the leadership and authority of Jesus Christ. Moreover, God, being a God of order and desiring orderly worship from His Bride (1 Corinthians 14:33), has established a form of administration in His true local churches on earth that also operates under the leadership and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The form of governance in AIK is described as a church governing board led by elders, shepherds, overseers, and pastors. Among the leaders in this governance board, there is no hierarchical structure. However, there is a hierarchical structure within the church in terms of duties and responsibilities: the Church Governance Board, the Church Service Board (deacons), and the church members. The church elders form the Local Elder Council of the church. The terms “overseership (ἐπίσκοπος, episkopos)” and similar titles mentioned in the Scriptures do not denote a separate rank but rather describe and define the role of a church elder (Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 2:25).

5. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

God has viewed His people as a whole since the beginning of creation. Both in the Old and New Testaments, God has commanded His people to come together regularly for worship (e.g., Leviticus 23; Acts 2:43-47). This demonstrates that Christians should belong to a local church community, and church membership is required.

The understanding and practice of church membership vary across denominations and local churches. The meaning of membership in AIK, the privileges and responsibilities of members, the membership process, etc., are explained below.

a. Church Membership Process

AEC consists of Participants and Members. Participants can attend all meetings except for Member meetings and special meetings determined by the Governance Board. Those who wish to have active roles in decision-making at member meetings or to hold certain responsibilities in the church must become Members.

To become a member of AEC, a person must first believe, complete the studies determined by the church (16 baptism studies), and be baptized. Additionally, they must accept the Membership Agreement of AIK and the provisions expressed in the Church's Governance Board and General Regulations. A person who wishes to become a member should express this desire to one of the leaders in the Church Governance Board. If their membership is approved following an evaluation by the Church Elders, they are accepted as a member of AIK.

b. Exiting Membership

Any member can voluntarily exit the membership of AEC. In this case, they must inform the church elders, presenting their reasons in writing or orally. If there are any issues between these members and the church, they should resolve these issues before leaving the

church. The elder council should assist in resolving these issues. If there are no outstanding issues, then these individuals can leave the church in peace.

c. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

There are three signs indicating that a local church is a true church: the preaching of God's Word and the Gospel, the proper administration of the Sacraments, and church discipline. In this sense, church discipline plays a very important role in a local church being considered a true church.

Church discipline is mentioned in many places in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament, the Laws given by God to His people, which regulate relationships with God and others, serve as examples of this discipline. In the New Testament, numerous verses address church discipline: Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Titus 1:13 and 2:15, Galatians 6:1, etc.

According to the Scriptures, church discipline is not about punishment or revenge. Rather, it is meant to help the church member live and act according to God's Word, to define the limits brought by church order, to lead those on the wrong path to repentance and righteousness, to correct wrongs, and to remove teachings, behaviors, and individuals not belonging to the church. The primary intent of church discipline is both to maintain justice in the church and to reclaim the erring individual with righteousness and mercy.

It is important to remember that the one who can change a person is the Lord. Church discipline cannot change a sinner on the wrong path. Instead, it is one of the tools the Lord uses in changing that sinner. In this regard, the local church should not apply church discipline with the wrong intent or method. That is, the church should not use church discipline to dictatorially govern its members as if it were replacing God. Church members should not fear church discipline but should humbly and repentantly obey it. For God has given His church both the authority and the command to apply discipline (Matthew 18:15-20). Churches with this perspective find that church discipline contributes to the growth of the church.

i. Stages of Church Discipline

Church discipline according to the Bible has several stages (Matthew 18:15-20). AEC applies church discipline according to the following stages. Church discipline starts from the first mentioned step and, if resolution is not achieved, proceeds to the next step at the end of each stage. The content and weight of church discipline become clearer and heavier at each step.

1. Elder Council's First Warning and Call to Repentance:

If a church member commits a sin or offense requiring church discipline, after an individual warning and failure to show repentance, the person is called and warned by the elder council. The individual is given time to repent from the sin, resolve the problems caused by the sin, and rectify the situations caused. The duration is determined by the elder council based on the severity of the sin. During this period, the elder council monitors the person with assigned tasks and check-ins. If the person acknowledges and confesses the sin and repents during this time, the discipline process ends at the conclusion of the period.

If the person does not acknowledge the sin or persists in the sin, then the individual is prohibited from participating in the Lord's Supper. Furthermore, if the person has responsibilities within the church, these are suspended. If the person is an elder or officer, then their service in these capacities is also suspended. Subsequently, the next stage is initiated.

2. Elder Council's Second Warning and Call to Repentance:

In this stage, the person who does not acknowledge the sin or repent (or who verbally claims to repent but shows no fruits of repentance) is called by the elder council for a second time and warned more sternly. The seriousness and consequences of the ongoing sin and disobedience between the first and second warnings are explained to the person. The elder council gives the person another period to confess the sin and repent. During this period, the church elders continue to monitor the person with the tasks they assign and periodic check-ins.

If the person acknowledges, confesses, and repents for the sin during this period, then the discipline process is concluded. The person can start participating in the Lord's Supper again. If the person had any suspended services, the church elder council decides whether to restore these responsibilities and services, and if so, determines how and when these will be reinstated.

If the person does not confess the sin and repent during this period, and if the church member under discipline neither confesses the sins nor shows fruits of repentance, then the church elder council will publicly announce the person's sin, disobedience, and rebellion against God's Word and the authority of God's church in front of the entire church community in a meeting that includes all church members. Moreover, the expulsion of this individual from the church will also be declared in the same verbal or written statement.

The church elder council is also obligated to inform other local churches about the expelled individual if deemed necessary. The elder council should warn other churches with an appropriate amount and quality of disclosure regarding this individual.

Church discipline is a very serious spiritual process. God has entrusted this responsibility not to any member of the local churches but to the elders of the local churches (Matthew 18:15-20). Thus, while church members can warn their erring brethren, it does not constitute church discipline. Only the church elders can administer church discipline. Therefore, if they see situations involving sin that are dangerous, they should report the situation to the church elders rather than intervene themselves.

CHURCH STATEMENT OF FAITH

1. HOLY SCRIPTURE

We believe that the Holy Scripture is inspired by God, written by men, and is the perfect treasure of Heavenly instruction. Its author is God, and therefore it is without error and wholly true. We believe in the absolute and ultimate authority of the unchanging, complete, perfected, without falsehood or error, singular, and eternal Word of God. It clarifies the principles of God's judgment and contains the only way of salvation for sin. It is the supreme standard and ultimate authority by which all human conduct, creeds, doctrines, and opinions should be tried until the end of the world.

The Scriptures contain commandments, principles, teachings, and historical stories that we believe are real, lived, or to be lived, and we reject the view that these teachings are allegorical unless specified by the scriptures themselves. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; Proverbs 30:5-6; Romans 2:12; 1 John 4:1

2. ONE TRUE GOD

We believe in the one living and true God. He is the infinite, limitless Creator and the supreme King of Heaven and earth. He is merciful, just, loving, and for His glory, He sovereignly governs all things. His holiness is indescribably glorious, and He is worthy of all honor, trust, and love. Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Mark 12:29-30; Psalm 83:18; Romans 1:20; Revelation 4:11; Exodus 15:11

3. TRINITY

We believe in one God who exists eternally in three distinct persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each of these persons possesses all divine attributes and is fully God; They have distinct but harmonious roles in the supreme plan of salvation. Deuteronomy 6:5; Mark 12:29; Mark 1:9-11; Matthew 28:19; John 10:30; Acts 5:3-4; Ephesians 2:1

3a. We believe in the existence of one living and true God, the infinite and limitless Creator, the supreme Sovereign of Heaven and earth. He is merciful, just, loving, and for His glory, He sovereignly governs all things.

3b. From eternity, we believe in one God who exists in three distinct Persons – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Although They fulfill distinct and harmonious roles in the work of salvation, each Person is fully God and equally possesses all the perfections of divinity.

3c. We believe that God the Father is fully divine and has complete sovereignty over creation. He is the source of all life and His sovereignty extends over all events both in time and eternity. In accordance with His glorious plan of salvation, He foreknows, elects, and predestines people. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Father draws sinners to believe in His Son. He forgives their sins and adopts them as His children, thereby reconciling them to Himself.

3d. We believe that God the Son is fully divine and has shared in the Father's glory since eternity. He was incarnated by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and is named Jesus. While remaining fully God, He took on human nature. He lived a sinless life, died in place of sinners, and was raised from the dead as Lord and Savior of all who believe. Jesus now sits at the right hand of God the Father and serves as the mediator between God and believers. He will soon return to judge sinners and gather those who trust in Him.

3e. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the eternal Spirit who shares in the fullness of the Godhead with the Father and the Son. He is the Spirit of Truth sent by the Father and Jesus Christ to complete the plan of salvation among God's people. His primary ministry is to convict sinners of their sins, impart new life in Christ to them, and seal them until the day of redemption, glorifying and exalting Jesus through the application of the Gospel in their hearts.

4. THE FALL OF MAN

We believe that humanity was created in the image of God and that all of us have inherited sinfulness due to the sin committed by our ancestors, Adam and Eve. As a result, all of humanity is utterly devoid of the holiness required by God and is completely inclined towards evil, not by necessity but by their own choice. Therefore, humanity cannot turn to God, has no excuse or defense, and is under the just judgment of eternal punishment. Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 3:1-24; Romans 5:12; Romans 1:20; Romans 3:19-20.

5. THE WAY OF SALVATION

We believe that sinners are saved solely by the grace of God through the works of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. He is fully God and fully man, conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life in obedience to the Father, taught the way of the Kingdom of God, performed miracles, suffered, died, and was raised from the dead. His death atoned for our sins and served as a sacrificial offering for our sins; our sins are forgiven in Him, and He bore the wrath of God on our behalf. Through Him, we are adopted into God's family. Ephesians 2:4-5; John 3:16; Philippians 2:5-8; 2 Corinthians 5:20-21; Isaiah 53:4-5; Galatians 4:4-7.

6. JUSTIFICATION

Justification is the act of declaring those who believe in Jesus Christ righteous, involving the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life based on the righteousness of Jesus Christ. God grants this not in exchange for any good works we have done, but solely through faith in Jesus Christ's works, reconciling us to the peace and favor of God, providing us with all the blessings necessary for eternity. John 1:16-17; Romans 5:8-11; Matthew 9:6; Romans 5:18-21; Romans 3:21-26.

7. SALVATION BY GRACE

We believe that the blessings of salvation are offered freely to everyone, regardless of ethnic background, race, social class, or gender, through the gospel. It is everyone's urgent duty to accept the gospel with repentant and obedient faith. Apart from one's own corruption and the damning refusal of the Gospel, even the greatest sinner can be saved by

faith in Christ. Revelation 22:17; Mark 1:15; Romans 1:16-17; John 5:39-40; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9.

8. RENEWAL

We believe that sinners must be born again to be saved. Renewal involves a change of mind and spirit towards holiness, a transformation so profound that it occurs under the mysterious influence of the Holy Spirit. This divine act ensures our voluntary compliance with the Gospel. The evidence of renewal, such as repentance and faith, are manifest in a new life as fitting proofs. John 3:1-8; Ezekiel 36:26; John 1:12-13; Ephesians 4:20-24; Galatians 5:16-23; Matthew 7:20.

9. REPENTANCE AND FAITH

We believe that repentance and faith are sacred works carried out in our spirits by the Holy Spirit. Through these, we are convinced of our guilt, the danger of wrath, and our helplessness, and that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. We approach God confessing our sins with sincere regret and asking for mercy. At the same time, we wholeheartedly accept our Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest, King, Lord, and God, and trust only in Him as our complete and sufficient Savior. Acts 11:18; Ephesians 2:8-9; Acts 2:37-39; Psalm 51; Romans 10:9-13; Hebrews 4:14.

10. SOVEREIGN GRACE

We believe that God, according to His eternal purpose, which He set in grace before the foundation of the world, has chosen some not for any foreseen merit in them, but solely out of His sovereign and good pleasure. This selection is perfectly compatible with human free agency. It is a glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, prevents boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, and reliance on God. It forms the basis of Christian assurance and how we should relate to others – as we have been shown mercy, so we should show mercy to others. John 1:12-13; John 6:36; John 16:16; 2 Timothy 1:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Acts 13:48; Ephesians 1:3-14; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 8:28-30; Titus 1:1; Colossians 3:12-13; Ephesians 4:32.

11. SANCTIFICATION

We believe that sanctification is the process of being set apart for God's holiness according to His will. This process, which begins with renewal, is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit through the reading and hearing of God's Word, self-examination, and prayer. These spiritual disciplines ensure that sanctification continues throughout the believer's life. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Philippians 2:12-13; 2 Corinthians 13:5.

12. PRESERVATION OF THE SAINTS

We believe that only those who are sincere believers persevere to the end. The major distinction that separates them from those who make an insincere profession is their continued devotion to Christ. Their well-being is watched over by a special providence, and they are preserved by the power of God through faith until salvation. 1 John 2:17-20, 1 John 3:8-10, 5:18; Matthew 13:20-21; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 13:5; Jude 24-25; Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8:35-38.

13. CHURCH

We believe that the universal and invisible church is the people of God called from all generations, languages, people, and nations throughout all ages. The universal and invisible church becomes visible in local churches. Even though the local church gathers in a building, it is not a place or building but a community of baptized believers. The sign of a healthy and true church is the correct teaching of God's Word and the proper administration of the sacraments. The sole, supreme authority over the church is Jesus Christ. God's Word governs the church. God's Word teaches the appointment of elders and deacons, and their qualifications, rights, and duties are most clearly defined in the letters to Timothy and Titus. The local church is autonomous and free from any external authority or control. It has the right to govern itself, free from the influence of individuals or hierarchical organizations. The mission of the church is to reflect the glory of God to the world by evangelizing as a community, discipling, and planting new churches. Revelation 7:9-10; Romans 16:3-5; Colossians 4:15; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18; Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:1-16; Titus 1:1-16; Acts 15:19-31; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Ephesians 3:21, Matthew 28:18-20.

14. SACRAMENTS

a. Baptism

We believe that Christian baptism is a solemn ceremony showing a believer's faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and symbolizing their union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism does not save nor is it necessary for salvation, but it portrays our death to sin and resurrection to new life. Those who believe in Christ should be baptized as soon as possible following their decision, in obedience to Christ's command. We do not practice infant baptism. We believe that only those who can sincerely profess their faith in Jesus Christ and personally decide to follow Him are suitable candidates for baptism (though we perform prayers and blessings for the spiritual growth and blessing of our children).

b. The Lord's Supper

We believe that the Lord's Supper is a ceremony commemorating the body given up for us and the blood shed by Jesus Christ, proclaiming his death until he comes again. Like baptism, the Lord's Supper does not save nor is it necessary for salvation. It should be taken only by believers in Christ, who must examine themselves before partaking. Although the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ are not present in the bread and wine, the risen Lord uniquely fellowships with His people during the Lord's Supper. Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:12; Luke 23:39-43; Acts 8:26-40; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, 10:16; Luke 22:14-20.

15. CIVIL GOVERNMENT

We believe that civil government is instituted by God for the order and welfare of society, and that its officials should be mentioned in our prayers and respected. Except in matters where they contradict the will of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience and the Ruler of the kings of the earth, obedience must be given to the authorities. Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; Daniel 3:15-18; Revelation 19:16.

16. END TIMES

We believe that only those justified by faith in the name of the Lord Jesus and sanctified by the Spirit of our God are truly regarded as righteous in God's sight. On the last day, Christ

will come in glory and raise the dead to administer just retribution. That day will mark a serious separation (the wicked will be judged and suffer conscious eternal punishment, while the righteous will rejoice forever). This judgment will bind people to Heaven or hell eternally based on the principles of righteousness. Those belonging to Jesus will inherit eternal life in the New Heavens and New Earth, where they will live forever in ever-increasing joy for the glory of God. Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; John 5:28-29; Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 21:9-27; Revelation 22:1-21.

17. HOLY SPIRIT AND HIS GIFTS

a. Baptism in the Holy Spirit

As indicated in the Scriptures, we believe that every believer who has sincerely trusted in God with all their heart, mind, and soul, and has repented and confessed their faith, has been baptized in the Holy Spirit and received the Holy Spirit. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is not an event that occurs after faith, but as believers draw closer to God, their knowledge of God, holy life, and worship should continually be filled with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 4:30; Ephesians 5:18; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22.

b. Gifts of the Holy Spirit

As taught in the Scriptures, we believe that every believer who has received the Holy Spirit has at least one gift that demonstrates the presence of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of this gift is for the edification of the Church, and we believe that all the gifts listed in the Scriptures are still active today until the coming of Christ. However, these gifts are not of the same authority and power as those possessed by the Apostles and Prophets. 1 Peter 4:10-11; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10; 1 Corinthians 12:28-30; Romans 12:3-8.

c. Spiritual Warfare

In Christianity, the concept of demons as mentioned in the Bible aligns with the concept of fallen angels. That is, the entities we refer to as demons are those who chose to follow

Satan's path, rebelling against God, and thus were former angels who had their angelic powers stripped away due to their sins. It is essential to acknowledge that they are real entities, not merely a sickness, an affliction, or an abstract idea. Demons, like humans and angels, have personalities and possess certain characteristics (James 2:19, Matthew 8:28-31). While the powers of demons, also known as fallen angels, are limited, this does not render them powerless. Their limited knowledge and power do not imply weakness; they still hold a certain degree of influence and activity on earth, particularly evident in the events during Jesus Christ's time. In Matthew chapter 9, for example, a mute, demon-possessed man is brought to Jesus. When Jesus expelled the demons, the man began to speak. In Matthew chapter 12, this time a blind and mute demon-possessed man was brought to Jesus. After Jesus healed the man, he began to speak and see. The Bible contains several such examples, showing that individuals possessed by demons can also exhibit various physical problems. Despite some groups denying their existence, the reality of evil spirits, or demons, is both an experiential and historical fact.

18. FAMILY

a. Marriage

According to what we see in the book of Genesis, we believe that God created humans as male and female. One of His commandments to them was to be fruitful and multiply. In this context, we believe that marriage and sexuality should occur between a man and a woman as God has created and commanded.

In Christianity, marriage is the smallest unit of society and its foundational stone; it involves a man and a woman coming together for a lifetime of spiritual and physical union for the purpose of forming a family. From this perspective, God values marriage highly in the Holy Scripture and commands spouses to remain faithful to each other until death. Marriage is a significant relationship, second only to one's relationship with God, thus it should be entered into wisely and seriously. Marriage, which has been esteemed and blessed by God since creation, involves love and fidelity, reflecting Christ's relationship with the church, and binds a man and woman together with inseparable bonds. Therefore, we believe that for a marriage to be built on solid foundations, both parties should be believers in the Christian faith, and the marriage should be formalized through both civil and church ceremonies. Furthermore, living together or sexual relations without a marriage

covenant are considered incorrect and sinful. We also regard all other sexual definitions and lifestyles outside the Biblical standards and definitions as sinful. Genesis 1:22,28; Genesis 2:21-25; Genesis 9:7; Matthew 19:4-6; Ephesians 5:22-33; 2 Corinthians 6:14-15; 1 Corinthians 7.

b. Divorce

Marriage is the union where a man and a woman come together in God's presence to become one flesh. It is hoped that this union lasts a lifetime. The Biblical view of marriage expresses that "what God has joined together, let no man separate." In Christianity, the most significant feature of marriage is its indissolubility. The reasons Christianity does not permit divorce include the fact that individuals marry in the presence of God and are considered one flesh in God's sight. Another reason is that marriage in Christianity symbolizes the union between Christ and the Church. During the marriage ceremony, the pastor places his hands on the bride and groom, blessing them through the Holy Spirit. Because of these reasons, marriage is an irreversible path for Christians, and there is no allowance for divorce. However, divorce is permitted in cases of adultery. Christian marriages are sacred covenants made with a commitment before God and expected to last a lifetime. We understand that every marriage faces challenges, including disagreements, conflicts, and even severe issues like abuse, humiliation, psychological and physical violence, which might be difficult to forgive. However, Christianity does not advocate for the immediate termination of marriage in these cases. Solutions should be sought to prevent the dissolution of the marriage. During such challenging times, it may be advised for spouses to live separately and seek counsel from church family advisors.

c. Abortion

Human life is important. One of the ultimate principles of the Christian moral system is the sanctity of life. The beginning and foundation of morality is respecting life. Humans are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27; 2:7; 9:5-6; Exodus 20:13; Job 1:21; Psalm 139; Acts 17:25,28; James 3:9). The importance of life comes from God, and the role of a Christian should be to protect this glorious creation, always upholding and cherishing the value and sanctity of life.

The Bible never directly mentions abortion. However, there are many teachings in the Bible that very clearly indicate what God's view on abortion is. Jeremiah 1:5 says that God knew

us before He formed us in the womb. Psalm 139:13-16 speaks of God's active role in our creation and formation in the womb. Exodus 21:22-25 prescribes the same penalty for someone who causes the death of a baby in the womb as for someone who commits murder, which clearly shows that God considers a baby in the womb as much a person as an adult. Therefore, for a Christian, it is not about the right to choose abortion. It is about the life or death of a human being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6).