

## ***On the God-Given Rights and Responsibilities of Parents***

WHEREAS, God has created all people in his image, male and female, with inherent dignity and value (Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 139:13); and

WHEREAS, God has established the family as the first and most foundational institution of society that existed prior to the state, and the relationship between parent and child, whether biological or legal, is a unique bond in society (Genesis 1:27-28; Psalm 24:1); and

WHEREAS, God possesses sovereign authority over all (Ezekiel 18:4; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2) and has entrusted to parents certain rights and responsibilities as the primary stewards of their children (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4), teaching them “spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth” (Baptist Faith and Message Article XVIII); and

WHEREAS, God has ordained the state to promote good and restrain evil, thereby cultivating the conditions necessary for the flourishing of children and families which are not defined by arbitrary or subjective moral claims, but by basic moral goods rooted in the character of God (1 Peter 2:14); and

WHEREAS, The United States Supreme Court in the 1925 *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* decision rightly stated that parents have the right “to direct the upbringing and education of children under their control”; and

WHEREAS, Parental rights are not absolute, and the state has a compelling interest to intervene in certain situations where children are being abused, neglected, or endangered; and

WHEREAS, It is becoming increasingly common for some in the medical, educational, business, and legal sectors to encroach upon and attempt to supersede these God-given rights and responsibilities of parents in the name of autonomy and expressive individualism; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, June 11-12, 2024, affirm that parents are the primary stewards of and decision-makers for their children, rather than teachers, doctors, or the state; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we honor God's good design for the family and the flourishing of children, and desire to see a culture that embraces and celebrates the formation of families; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call upon parents to exercise their rights and responsibilities to make decisions regarding the upbringing of their children, under the authority of God, recognizing that they will be held responsible for their choices (Matthew 25:14-30); and be it further

RESOLVED, That we encourage the state to partner with, rather than act contrary to, the family unit, enacting legislation that protects and upholds parental rights, ensuring that parents have the freedom to make decisions regarding the upbringing, education, and healthcare of their children without undue interference, recognizing that parents are the primary arbiters of a child's moral and spiritual formation; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we call upon churches, pastors, and all Southern Baptists to advocate for policies and practices that support and strengthen the family unit, recognizing it as the primary institution for the nurturing and upbringing of children.

