The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission exists to be a catalyst to connect the agenda of the Kingdom of Christ to the cultures of local congregations for the sake of the mission of the Gospel in the world. The work of the ERLC is summed up in three words: Kingdom, Culture, Mission.

The Kingdom is an “already” present reality (within the life of the church) but also a “not yet” future hope (as we await the coming of Jesus). This Kingdom come includes not just worship, but righteousness (ethics), freedom (religious liberty), communion (society), authority (politics), and “the glory and honor of the nations” (culture). Seeking first the Kingdom of God should not dampen our concern for ethics but should instead heighten it. After all, the priorities of the King must become the priorities of His Kingdom colony, the church. Therefore, the Kingdom of God sets both the content of our concern and the tone with which we speak.

While the culture is teeming with issues to which the ERLC will speak, marriage is one example of where our faithful witness is absolutely necessary for a watching world to see. Many Christians assume that the “rightness” of a marriage definition is constituted by a majority with power. But our beliefs about marriage aren’t what they are because we are in a majority. In fact, we must concede that we are in a minority if we define marriage the way the Bible does. However, we won’t persuade our neighbors by mimicking their angry protests or by bringing corporations to the ground in surrender. We persuade them by holding fast to the Gospel, by explaining our view of marriage as a picture of the covenant union of Christ and His church, and by serving the world and our neighbors around us with a towel and a foot-bucket.

The mission of the ERLC includes reaffirmation of how ethical transformation and religious liberty fit into our larger cooperative mandate to evangelize the peoples of the world. This includes a conscious effort to speak with convivial kindness. (The lesbian activist debating on television might never come to know Christ, but there might well be a teenager with same-sex attractions who is watching to see whether the people of Christ see her as an irredeemable freak.) Because we see our “opponents” as those we want to persuade and realize that others are overhearing the conversation, we seek to engage every issue in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Issues
The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission speaks for Southern Baptists in the public square as well as to Southern Baptists, equipping Christians and the local church, especially on a number of key issues:

• Religious Liberty—The ERLC helps churches to understand what religious liberty is and why it matters. Freedom of religion is a critical part of a Kingdom-oriented, Baptist understanding of the church. It is increasingly important in our pluralistic culture.

• Human Dignity—The ERLC enables churches to navigate complex issues related to human dignity, including abortion, artificial reproductive technology, and sex trafficking.

• Family Stability—The ERLC equips churches to protect the stability of marriage and family from cultural shifts like divorce and homosexuality.
The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention

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• Civil Society—The ERLC prepares churches to evaluate how they can carry out the Great Commission while also caring for the common good of civil society.

What does the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission do?

• ERLC.com—The ERLC website provides a hub of resources related to ethics and culture, helping churches engage issues in light of the Kingdom of God. Canon & Culture includes thoughtful essays from a wide variety of conservative scholars who are seeking to apply the Gospel of the Kingdom to cultural issues.

• Policy Work—The ERLC represents the SBC through policy work at all levels of government to advocate for biblical priorities and protections in the areas of ethics and religious liberty.

• Preaching and Teaching—The ERLC team preaches and teaches frequently in churches and on college and seminary campuses.

• Publications—The ERLC develops books, articles, curricula, and other publications to enable churches to address key moral and ethical issues. Concise briefs on major cultural issues equip pastors and church leaders for preaching, counseling, and staff training.

• Multimedia—The ERLC utilizes emerging video, audio, and social platforms. It hosts four podcasts, including “Signposts” with Russell Moore and “The Way Home” with Daniel Darling, as well as a growing library of videos and an active presence on social media.

• Events—The ERLC hosts Evangelicals for Life in Washington, DC, and the ERLC National Conference each year. These events are designed to equip pastors and church leaders to lead their people in a changing culture. The ERLC also partners with churches and Christian organizations to host a variety of equipping events around the country.

• Psalm 139 Project—The Psalm 139 Project helps provide sonogram machines to local pregnancy centers. The project is funded entirely by donations.

To accomplish its aims, the ERLC works with other entities both within and outside the Convention to establish common cause on moral and ethical issues, demonstrating the long history of cooperation in Southern Baptist life. This principle of cooperation is one of the spiritual principles established in Southern Baptists’ confession of faith, *The Baptist Faith and Message*.

Ultimately, the ERLC seeks to articulate every priority and every agenda item in terms of where it fits in seeking the Kingdom of God in this era, in order to equip churches to stand before the watching world with the sort of quiet confidence that characterized Jesus.