

The Sola 5 association is designed to be a genuine fellowship of God's people participating together in faith and ministry. Such a fellowship is based on the sharing of biblical values. It is these Core Values which make Sola 5 a most distinct association of churches. These values express the convictions and practices that have grown out of our doctrine and theology. They put hands and feet on our Confession of Faith.

It is extremely important, therefore, that the brethren in our churches share these values. Real heart and soul convictions about such matters as the Core Values cover grow over time through being exposed to and made to think about the Scripture's teaching on them. None of us think biblically automatically.

That is what these discussion questions are for. This is a tool for use in Bible studies, home fellowship groups or even new members' classes. The questions are designed to provoke thought, stimulate discussion and interact with the Scriptures. They not only provide a way to inculcate these values into our churches, but in the process of discussion, to reveal what values our people presently have so we know where more teaching needs to be done.

Many of these questions focus on application and experience since these values must be part of real life. Be specific in answering them. Bring the principles into concrete practices.

The Core Values are laid out in a general order of dealing with those matters common to man as man followed by those matters common to man as Christian. We begin with God-centredness because that is our worldview and the basis of everything else for everyone else, whether a person is Christian or not.

A good approach to using this discussion guide is to first read through the value. Then you may various people in the group locate and read the Scriptures provided as you come to discuss that part of the value.

Proceed through the questions in order allowing for lively discussion and contemplation of the issues addressed. If you find other Scriptures or questions helpful, add them into your discussion (and send them to us for inclusion in future editions).

May our great God and Saviour bless you as you seek to instil biblical values in your heart and life!

Core Value 1: God-Centredness

God commands us to glorify him in all we do. Furthermore, he requires us to love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (1 Corinthians 10:31; Mark 12:30).

Therefore we affirm that our lives in their entirety must be lived before God, under his authority, and for his glory alone. In the light of this, we will endeavour to be focused on honouring and pleasing God in our personal lives, our worship and all our co-operative activities (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

We deny that there is a place for man-centredness or for the promotion of our own popularity, carnal success or self-image (Jeremiah 45:5; Romans 2:29).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the opening statement present God-centredness as a comprehensive focus in our lives?
2. In the first sentence of the affirmation there are three ways our lives are to be lived if they are to be God-centred. Explain what each one looks like in practice.
3. The second sentence of the affirmation says we are to honour and please God in three spheres of life. Apply your answers to Question 2 above to each of these spheres.
4. The denial speaks against man-centredness and three expressions of it. How do these things express themselves in the church? How can they be avoided?

Core Value 2: Logic and Reason

God has created human beings as rational creatures in his own image (Genesis 1:27; Psalm 32:9).

Therefore we affirm the necessity of logic and reason as tools for the correct understanding of truth, which is not contradictory (Isaiah 5:20).

We deny that faith is illogical or irrational (Isaiah 1:18); we further deny that logic apart from revelation or reason apart from the Holy Spirit's illumination is sufficient for knowing truth (1 Corinthians 2:6–16).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the opening statement necessitate the use of logic and reason?
2. If logic and reason are not used, how can truth be understood?
3. The affirmation states that truth is not contradictory. Why is this so?
4. How does the first statement of the denial contradict popular ideas about faith?
5. According to the second part of the denial, how must logic and reason be used?
6. Why do you think this is an important Core Value?

Core Value 3: Authority

God is the only being with intrinsic authority; consequently, all human authority is delegated by him (Romans 13:1; Matthew 28:18).

Therefore we affirm that God has established three spheres of human government, and that he alone defines what their various responsibilities are.

- Family government is for the upbringing and education of children, as well as for the nurturing of orderly human relationships in honour, discipline and love. The family is the basic unit of society (Ephesians 5:22–6:4; Deuteronomy 6:4–9).
- Church government is for the spiritual well-being and ministry of God's people (1 Corinthians 12:12–27; 1 Thessalonians 5:12–15; Hebrews 13:7, 17).
- Civil government is for the well-ordering and protection of society; this includes the appropriate punishment of criminals (Romans 13:1–7).

We deny that any sphere of government is without accountability to God, and that any government may assume the responsibilities God has assigned to another sphere of authority. This means that, while there must be a separation of church and state, there is no separation of the state from God (Psalm 2; Revelation 11:15).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the importance of the words "intrinsic" and "delegated" in the opening statement.
2. How do the opening statement and the affirmation contradict contemporary ideas about authority and government?
3. Three responsibilities are identified as belonging to family government. Discuss specific ways in which those three responsibilities can be fulfilled by parents.
4. What is the importance of "honour, discipline and love" in light of the last statement about the family?
5. Think about the importance and benefit of church government. How can your church improve in its responsibilities?
6. In what ways is the statement on civil government much more limiting than the way most civil governments operate?
7. The denial refers to what is called "sphere sovereignty," meaning that one sphere of government cannot take over responsibilities belonging to another sphere. In what ways do family, church and civil government try to assume each others' responsibilities?
8. How does the last statement of the denial correct common misunderstandings about the separation of church and state?

Core Value 4: Sanctity of Life

God the Creator has the sole right to give and take human life, which belongs to him and is defined by him alone (Nehemiah 9:6; Isaiah 42:5).

ABORTION

Therefore we affirm that life begins at the moment of conception and that abortion is the taking of a human life (Psalm 51:5).

We deny that abortion is merely an issue of a woman's right of choice over her own body (Psalm 139:13–16).

THE DEATH PENALTY

We further affirm the responsibility of civil government to execute the death penalty for premeditated murder, in order to demonstrate the sanctity of life and to deter such crime (Genesis 9:6; Romans 13:4; Ecclesiastes 8:11).

We deny that the just execution of a murderer by the God-ordained authorities is itself murder, and that such criminals have a right to life (Numbers 35:30–34).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the opening statement assert about the limits of medical science?
2. In what ways does the statement on abortion uphold the sanctity of life?
3. What arguments would you make to support the affirmation and denial under abortion?
4. How does the statement on the death penalty promote the sanctity of life?
5. What do the affirmation and denial under the death penalty say about the biblical concepts of justice and human rights?
6. According to these values, is every taking of a human life murder? Why/Why not?
7. What other issues besides abortion and the death penalty are connected to the sanctity of life? What biblical affirmation and denial would you write for each issue?

Core Value 5: Marriage and Sexuality

God created mankind male and female, and ordained marriage as a life-long union between a natural man and a natural woman (Genesis 2:18–25).

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Therefore we affirm that husband and wife are no longer two but one and that God intends marriage to last as long as both partners are alive (Matthew 19:4–6). We affirm that there are certain circumstances in which Scripture permits divorce (Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:10–16); nevertheless, divorce always grieves the Lord and hurts those involved (Malachi 2:16).

We deny that marriage is merely a negotiated contract which may be terminated at will. We deny that divorce is permissible for any cause not permitted in Scripture.

MARRIAGE AND SEXUAL PURITY

We further affirm that marriage is by nature heterosexual (Genesis 2:24), and that any expression of sexual intimacy is holy only in the covenant of marriage (Exodus 20:14; Hebrews 13:4).

We deny the legitimacy and permissibility of homosexuality, lesbianism, fornication, adultery, pornography, paedophilia, bestiality, prostitution, incest and other forms of sexual perversion (Romans 1:24–27).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What elements in the opening statement are most significant?
2. What does this value say about divorce? What does it not say?
3. What does this value say about homosexuality? How does it counter modern arguments for homosexuality?
4. How does this value confront modern dating practices?

Core Value 6: Discipline

God is a God of order and justice, who disciplines those he loves for their good (1 Corinthians 14:33; Hebrews 12:5–11).

Therefore we affirm the duty of churches to discipline their unrepentant members, excommunication being the final means of grace for their reconciliation (Matthew 18:15–17). We further affirm the responsibility of parents to discipline their children in the spirit of loving correction. This discipline may include corporal punishment (Proverbs 22:15).

We deny that all such discipline in the church and the home is unloving or harmful to its recipients when done according to the rules of Scripture and in the spirit of Christ (Leviticus 19:17; Proverbs 13:24).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways is God the pattern for all discipline?
2. Why is discipline so important?
3. What statements in this value express the intention and motives for discipline?
4. How should discipline in the home and church be carried out?

Core Value 7: Gender Roles

God our creator has established a difference in the creation and roles of men and women, which we are not at liberty to change (Genesis 1:27; 1 Corinthians 11:7–9).

Therefore we affirm the male headship of responsibility in the home and in the church, to be exercised in the spirit of Christlike, sacrificial servanthood (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22–33; 1 Timothy 3:1–5).

We deny that women are inferior to men in value (Galatians 3:28; 1 Corinthians 11:11–12), and we deny that women may serve in leadership roles as pastors or elders (1 Timothy 2:11–14).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does this statement confront modern culture? Why is it so important?
2. How is male headship defined and qualified in the affirmation?
3. What is the role of the wife in the home?
4. What is the role of women in the church?
5. Why are the two statements of the denial not contradictory?

Core Value 8: Vocation

God calls each of his people to serve him in various ways in this world (1 Corinthians 7:20–24; Colossians 3:22–25).

Therefore we affirm the sanctity of labour and the validity of all vocations which are not contrary to the righteous requirements of Scripture (1 Thessalonians 4:11–12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–10).

We deny that work and business are outside the realm of Christian living, and we deny that they may be performed as something other than service to Christ (Ephesians 6:5–9).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does this value indicate we are to think about our employment or business?
2. How would this affect a young person's decision about his/her career?
3. What does this say about the common separation of secular and sacred in a Christian's life?
4. How can you perform your job or run your business "as service to Christ"?

Core Value 9: Racial Harmony

God has created all mankind in his own image; all people are of one blood, having descended from Adam (Genesis 5:1–3; Acts 17:26–28). Furthermore, God in Christ has broken down every wall that sin has made to separate us, creating one new humanity in Christ (Ephesians 2:13–18).

Therefore we affirm the dignity and human brotherhood of all mankind in addition to the unity of all believers in Christ regardless of race, colour or ethnicity (Colossians 3:11). We will therefore take steps personally and corporately to encourage racial and cultural harmony, expressing this visibly in our communities and churches.

We deny that there is any basis in reason or in the Bible for racial discrimination by any person against other people (Revelation 7:9).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What forms does racism take in our society? How have you experienced it?
2. Are there practices that society considers to be racial discrimination which are not?
3. How does the first sentence provide a rationale against racism in general?
4. What additional reason do Christians have for racial harmony?
5. What does the first part of the affirmation say about our attitude toward other races?
6. List some practical steps that can bring to pass the second part of the affirmation.

Core Value 10: Creation

God is the sovereign creator of the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1–2:3; Hebrews 11:3).

Therefore we affirm that the account of creation in Genesis is a record of historical events, that God created everything out of nothing, after its own kind, and that man was specially created in the image of God.

We deny the philosophy of evolutionism in all its various expressions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why is “evolutionism” called a philosophy here?
- What are some of its “various expressions”?
- How do the following elements of the affirmation contradict evolution and affirm a biblical worldview (“philosophy”)?
 Genesis 1–2 are historical events.
 God created out of nothing.
 Creatures were made after their own kind.
 Man was created in God's image.

Core Value 11: Animals and the Environment

God has given mankind dominion over that part of his creation which is not made in his image and needs to be subdued, especially since the fall and God's subsequent curse (Genesis 1:26–28; 3:17–19).

Therefore we affirm the stewardship of human beings to use animals and the environment for the glory of God and the benefit of humanity within the guidelines of biblical principles of ecology. We also affirm God's ownership of all land and mankind's responsibility to use it for his glory, considering the needs of fellow human beings and future generations (Genesis 9:1-17; Psalm 24:1).

We deny that animals have rights or value equal to that of human beings, we also deny that the environment is without corruption, is self-determining, or shares in the nature of God in any way (Romans 8:20).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the God-ordained relationship of human beings to animals and the environment?
2. Explain the principles and activities of dominion and stewardship.
3. What would you say are some “biblical principles of ecology”?
4. How does the second part of the affirmation address current land disputes?

5. What popular ideas does the denial deny?

Core Value 12: Pluralism

The only true and living God is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who has revealed himself in holy Scripture (Isaiah 43:10–11; Matthew 28:19; 1 John 5:20).

Therefore we affirm that he alone is to be worshipped and obeyed in all of life, and that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour for sinners (Exodus 20:3; 1 Timothy 2:5).

We deny that any other religion or creed is valid and should be considered a respectable equal to biblical Christianity (1 Kings 18:21; Acts 5:29).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is pluralism? How is it expressed in society today?
2. How is the exclusivity of biblical Christianity expressed in this value?
3. What is such exclusivity accused of by a pluralistic society?
4. How would you defend the faith against such accusations?
5. The denial is very strong against the validity and respectability of other religions. How should we personally treat those who follow false gods and religions?

Core Value 13: Freedom of Religion

God has ordained civil government for the ordering of society in order to ensure the peaceful co-existence of all citizens irrespective of race or creed (Romans 13:1–7; 1 Timothy 2:1–4).

Therefore we affirm the responsibility of government to ensure that citizens are free to practise and propagate religion according to their consciences.

We deny that civil government has the right to prescribe or forbid any religion—be that religion Christianity, pluralism, secularism, or any other.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the biblical relationship between government and religion?
2. Why is the freedom of conscience in religion a necessary thing?
3. In what ways might government “prescribe” a religion?
4. In what ways might government “forbid” a religion?
5. How does this value relate to the previous value on pluralism? Are they consistent or contradictory? Why?

Core Value 14: Evangelism

God has ordained evangelism—the proclamation and teaching of the biblical message about Christ and him crucified—as the primary human activity through which he will call his elect people to salvation (1 Corinthians 1:17–25).

Therefore we affirm that in this regard our core activity is to unite efforts in God-centred evangelism and missions, through which Bible-believing churches will be established throughout and beyond (Matthew 28:18–20).

We deny that evangelism is an activity aimed at entertaining the lost and meeting their felt social needs (1 Corinthians 2:1–5).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is the activity (method) of evangelism defined?
2. How is the message of evangelism defined?
3. How does God use evangelism?
4. According to the affirmation, what must evangelism result in?
5. What makes evangelism God-centred?
6. What is wrong with the activities mentioned in the denial?
7. Why must God-centred evangelism be our “core activity” as an association?
8. How can you and your church be more evangelistic?

Core Value 15: Sufficiency of Scripture

God has revealed all that is necessary for life and godliness in his Word (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Therefore we affirm the complete sufficiency of the Scripture for faith and obedience in all areas of life (2 Peter 1:3; Matthew 4:4); we also affirm the completion of God's revelation in the sixty-six books of the Bible (Jude 3).

We deny that any further revelation is being given today through so-called prophets and apostles (Ephesians 2:20), or through any revelatory gifts (1 Corinthians 13:8–13; Hebrews 2:3–4). We further deny that human traditions or conventions should be followed without continual evaluation in the light of Scripture, since such things have no intrinsic authority (Matthew 15:1–9; Colossians 2:20–23).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What things might Christians wrongly look to in addition to Scripture for “life and godliness”?
2. What does the first part of the affirmation have to do with your daily living? The will of God? Your opinions on social issues? Dealing with life's problems? Handling your finances? Running your business? Caring for your family? Making decisions in the church, etc.?
3. The second part of the affirmation and first sentence of the denial deal with the same issue of a “closed canon.” How do the verses in the footnotes demonstrate that this is the case?
4. What are some of the things in your life/church that the second sentence of the denial apply to?

Core Value 16: Expository Preaching

God has ordained preaching as the primary means by which his people are brought to faith and sanctified (Romans 10:17; Ezekiel 37:4–6; John 17:17; James 1:18–25).

Therefore we affirm the centrality of expository preaching since this best reflects the mind of God and most edifies his people. We place a high premium on a Christ-centred exposition of the Scriptures, promoting it in our churches and theological schools (Psalm 1; Luke 24:27).

We deny that things such as films, drama and musical programmes, while having a place in life in general, should take the place of the preaching of the word in corporate worship (2 Timothy 4:1–4).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between expository preaching and other kinds of preaching?
2. How does this value follow from the previous one?
3. What reasons are given for valuing expository preaching?
4. How would a “Christ-centred” exposition differ from other kinds of expositions?
5. What is wrong with the alternatives to preaching mentioned in the denial?

Core Value 17: Genuine Christianity

A true Christian is a person whose nature has been transformed by the Holy Spirit from a God-resisting orientation to a God-seeking orientation (1 John 5:18–20).

Therefore we affirm that all true Christians display certain marks of regeneration, namely: ongoing and continual dependence on Christ alone (1 John 5:10–12); habitual obedience to his commands and habitual rejection of evil (1 John 2:3; 3:7–10); sacrificial love for God and fellow believers (1 John 3:10, 17; 4:7–21); the ability to overcome the ungodly pressures of a society antagonistic to its maker (i.e. the “world”) (1 John 5:4); perseverance in faith and obedience to the end of life (1 John 2:19; Matthew 24:13; Hebrews 3:14).

We deny that a person who makes a mere outward profession of Christianity without displaying the above marks is a genuine Christian.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. According to the opening statement, what is the essence of a genuine Christian?
2. Why are most of the Scriptures in this Core Value from 1 John (see 1 John 5:13)?
3. How does “ongoing and continual dependence on Christ alone” express itself in times of trials or temptation? In family relationships? At school or work? In your thoughts and speech?
4. How does “habitual obedience to his commands and habitual rejection of evil” express itself in times of trials or temptation? In family relationships? At school or work? In your thoughts and speech?
5. How does “sacrificial love for God and fellow believers” express itself in times of trials or temptation? In family relationships? At school or work? In your thoughts and speech?
6. How does “the ability to overcome the ungodly pressures of a society antagonistic to its Maker (i.e. the ‘world’)” express itself in times of trials or temptation? In family relationships? At school or work? In your thoughts and speech?
7. How does “perseverance in faith and obedience to the end of life” express itself in times of trials or temptation? In family relationships? At school or work? In your thoughts and speech?
8. Why is a “mere outward profession” not enough?
9. Explain how all of the above can be true even though we are saved by faith not by works.

Core Value 18: Personal Devotion to God

God is a living God who dwells among his people in covenant relationship (Ephesians 2:22; Hebrews 8:8–12).

Therefore we affirm the individual believer's personal walk with God in all of life, enjoying communion with him in a vital relationship—which includes commitment to a local church (Micah 6:8; 1 John 1:3; Philippians 2:1).

We deny that mere intellectual adherence to an orthodox creed or confession apart from a regenerated heart issuing in good works is truly Christian (2 Timothy 3:5; Matthew 23:25–28).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does this value expand on the previous one?
2. Why is it so important to be relational with God?
3. How can the believer be truly relational with God in all of life?
4. How is commitment to a local church necessary to walking with God?
5. Why is being “orthodox” not enough?

Core Value 19: Good Works and Social Concern

God has created his people in Christ for good works, which are to be done in obedience to God's commandments as the fruit and evidence of a true and lively faith, for the glory of God (Ephesians 2:8–10).

Therefore we affirm the importance of engaging in good works such as helping orphans, looking after widows, caring for the poor and speaking for the dumb (unborn children) (James 1:27; 1 Timothy 5:3–16; Isaiah 58:6–7; Proverbs 31:8–9).

We deny that good works are the ground or basis (rather than the evidence) of our salvation (Romans 11:5; Galatians 3:10–14).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the opening statement define good works?
2. What are our responsibilities in the good works listed in the affirmation: helping orphans; looking after widows; caring for the poor; speaking for the dumb (unborn children)?
3. What does the denial say about our motivation for doing good works?

Core Value 20: Autonomy and Interdependency

God has instituted the local church as a self-governing body through which his people will be evangelised, edified and engaged in good works for his glory. He has also revealed in his word that a local church may cooperate with other local churches (Matthew 18:15–20; 2 Corinthians 8:16–21).

Therefore we affirm the principle of local church autonomy, as well as that of the interdependency of local churches. We also affirm that local churches may cooperate with each other in order to unite their efforts and resources around common projects.

We deny the need to form an institution with officers bearing instruments of power that would undermine or even replace the autonomy of any local church. We also deny that any local church should ignore its relationships with other local churches; in particular, no

church should receive members from another local church without regard for disciplinary measures taken by that church.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose and function of the local church?
2. What should the relationship be between local churches?
3. What kind of common projects can we be involved in?
4. What does it mean for a local church be autonomous, but not independent?
5. What does it mean for our churches to function as interdependent with one another?
6. What are the limits of interdependency?

Core Value 21: The Unity of the Church

God's Word teaches the essential unity of God's people based upon union with Christ, truth and righteousness (Ephesians 4:3–6; 1 Corinthians 12:12–27).

Therefore we affirm a biblically and doctrinally based cooperation among true churches of Jesus Christ for the purpose of reaching the whole world with the gospel of Christ (John 17:20–23).

We deny that there is any biblical basis for an ecumenism that calls for an organisational unification of the Protestant churches of the world (and ultimately of all professing Christians) which disregards the essential and fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the virgin birth, the atoning work of Christ, regeneration, conversion, justification by faith alone and sanctification (Amos 3:3).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the basis of the church's unity?
2. How does the affirmation describe the basis and purpose of our cooperation?
3. What error is the denial addressing?
4. How does this give us discernment about whether or not to be involved with community Christian events and programs?

Core Value 22: Liberty of Conscience

God in Christ has purchased the liberty of believers, freeing them from the guilt of sin, God's wrath, unbiblical traditions and regulations of men, Satan and the fear of death (Galatians 5:1; Colossians 2:8–23; Hebrews 2:14–15).

Therefore we affirm that believers are bound in their consciences only to God and his Word, not to the impositions of men and of Satan (Romans 14:1–15:4). We further affirm that Christian liberty is nothing but freedom to serve God within the boundaries that God himself has set (Romans 6:8–22).

We deny that Christian liberty gives licence to sin of any kind (Romans 6:1–7). We further deny that any church or its leaders have a right to expect obedience from members when they teach things that are contrary or additional to God's Word (Matthew 15:1–9; Colossians 2:20–23).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. From what has God set his people free?

2. Why is the first statement of the affirmation so important?
3. What are some teachings, standards, superstitions, traditions, etc. that often bind a person's conscience, but are not God's commands?
4. How is Christian liberty defined in the second part of the affirmation and first part of the denial?
5. What is the limit of church authority?
6. On the basis of this value, would you agree or disagree with the following statement and why: "You are free to do whatever the Bible does not prohibit"?

Core Value 23: Hyper-Orthodoxy

Our Lord has warned his church against straining out gnats while swallowing camels (Matthew 23:24).

Therefore we affirm that in essentials there must be unity, in nonessentials liberty and in all things charity (Titus 1:9–11; 1 Corinthians 8:1–13; Colossians 3:12–15).

We deny that our understanding of infallible truth is itself infallible and that all matters are equally important; therefore we deny that all matters require contention and division among those who differ (Matthew 23:23).

For the purpose of fellowship in Sola 5, we consider non-essentials to be those matters which are outside of our Confession of Faith and Core Values.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the essentials?
2. What are the non-essentials?
3. How are we to show charity to one another in all things?
4. What is important about the first statement in the denial?
5. What matters do require division? What things do not?