

Ethical Affirmations for EPC Leaders

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory. So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.
—Colossians 3:1-5

As EPC leaders called by God to the gospel ministry, we must recognize the eternal significance and responsibility of that call and understand that we are being watched, our actions are being evaluated, our words are being critiqued, and our attitudes are being assessed by others in the church and in the world.

Because our highest call is to do all for the glory of God we must hold ourselves to a high standard of behavior. Therefore, we should:

1. Exalt God as Sovereign Lord of the universe.

We should always endeavor to honor, glorify, and worship God, representing Him well in every relationship and in every endeavor.

Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; worship the LORD in the splendor of His holiness.

—Psalm 29:1-2

2. Emphasize integrity.

We are called to walk in humility, but with confidence because God is with us. There is no justification for selfishness, self-centeredness, or ego-driven goals.

We will hold ourselves to the same level of accountability that we ask of those whom we are leading.

We desire to be wise stewards of money whether personal funds or ministry funds. Theft, fraud, or the misappropriations of ministry funds or property are inexcusable. We should give an honest accounting of ministry expenses. Gifts of money or other gifts of value should not influence our decisions.

We should not speak critically of other churches, nor should we purposefully recruit believers from other churches to join our fellowship.

Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.
—1 Timothy 4:12

3. Expect excellence.

We are called to be faithful to the Bible, applying it to our own lives first as we seek God's guidance. We should share the truth of the Scriptures with wisdom, grace, and conviction, speaking the truth in love.

We should model integrity when preaching and teaching, acknowledging outside sources when their words or ideas are used.

We should study diligently to understand and promote doctrinal and theological orthodoxy.

We should lead with holiness, humility, and boldness, looking to the interests of others.
—Philippians 2:4

We should strive to be trustworthy, to work well with others, and to work wisely. We should strive to be promise-keepers, not compromising spiritual or personal values.

We should welcome opportunities (workshops, seminars, classes) that will challenge our hearts and minds, stimulating spiritual growth.

We should lead with the authority that Jesus gives, coupled with the sacrificial life and attitude that He lived.

We should read the Scriptures regularly, meditate upon them, listen for the leading of the Holy Spirit, and pray for a moldable heart and a spiritually receptive mind.

We should strive to conform to God's will rather than surrender to human desires and agendas.

And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.
—Colossians 3:17

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing, and perfect will. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. —Romans 12:1-3

4. Embrace compassion.

We are called to care for those in our charge with love, grace, and forgiveness. We should listen to understand, speak to heal, lovingly confront, and make decisions that promote reconciliation, peace and unity.

We should remember that those we are speaking with are created in the image of God. We should be kind and accepting towards all, although not accepting of unbiblical behavior or values.

We should ensure confidence in private conversations, acknowledging that it may occasionally be necessary to disclose confidential information, e.g. if that information concerns the immediate danger of bodily harm/loss of life, or when applicable laws mandate reporting.

We should always speak truth in love, recognizing that uncontrolled anger is unacceptable, and that neither gossip nor slander will be tolerated. We should avoid establishing unrealistic expectations for others or ourselves.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. —Ephesians 4:29-32

We should care for ourselves, as well as others: spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, and relationally.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. —1 Corinthians 6:19-20

5. Excel in holy behavior.

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. —1 Peter 1:15

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. —1 Peter 2:11

Do not love the world or anything in the world. —1 John 2:15

We are called to holy living, so we should not place ourselves in compromising situations, either personally or professionally. We should resist the devil and flee from temptation. We should try to identify our vulnerabilities and make specific provisions to safeguard our hearts and minds from these temptations.

We affirm sexuality as a gift from God and seek to honor this gift by conforming to biblical standards.

We should be intentional about regular self-examination.

We should strive towards a life of surrender and a repentant spirit.

6. Engage heart-to-heart.

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. —Proverbs 27:17

It is vital to deliberately place ourselves in relationships where mutual accountability occurs, constructive criticism can be shared without being concerned about responding defensively, where encouragement is the heart beat of these gatherings, and where focus and direction can be shaped in the presence of people who share a similar journey of personal and spiritual growth.

We should welcome accountability from spiritual partners and peers in ministry. We should willingly submit to spiritual discipline should we violate our ordination vows as leaders in the Church.

And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three {strands} is not quickly torn apart. —Ecclesiastes 4:12

7. Empower God's people.

We should motivate, prepare, and mobilize the people of God to impact the world for

Christ. This includes inspiring co-workers and other believers to be missional and to intimately connect with the passions of God's heart.

We should esteem our co-workers as fellow laborers in the gospel ministry. We should not consider our co-workers as better than other believers, nor should we take for granted our co-worker's gifts and abilities, time and treasure.

Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.
—Ephesians 4:12

As a leader in Christ's Church, and as one who represents the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, I commit to these Ethical Affirmations for EPC Leaders.

Name _____ Date _____

Signature _____

The 35th General Assembly (June 2015) adopted the Ethical Affirmations for EPC Leaders for use with Candidates Under Care, and strongly encouraged its use in EPC presbyteries and churches.