

Calvary Church

Position Statement on Sexuality

June 2013

This Statement, drawn from Scripture as our ultimate authority, sets forth a Christian vision of human sexuality as a good gift of God. The divine design for sexual expression is fundamental to the well-ordering of human society and is integral to human flourishing. We desire to articulate this ethic as moral truth binding on us all while recognizing our need of God's grace and forgiveness in the ways that we all fall short of this divine ideal.

In all that we do, we will seek to honor Christ, to preach and teach the truth, to be transformed by the power of the gospel and to reflect the grace and love of Christ to our community and our world. We seek to remain true to the mission God has given Calvary and to the direction provided by Scripture. We are mindful that all of us fall short of God's ideal in many ways and that Christ welcomes and ministers to all who genuinely come to Him, including us. It is important to remember that welcoming those who fall short of God's standard is not an endorsement of their behavior. It is an expression of God's desire to meet those who need Him right where they are. We desire to follow the example of Christ, meeting those who fall short of His standard where they are and being a part of life and community transformation by His power.

This statement is adapted from "A Church Statement on Human Sexuality" from the Evangelical Free Church of America Spiritual Heritage Committee, May 2013

Affirmations:

- Our views of this issue flow from our commitment to God (Dt. 6:5; Matt. 22:37-38) and to His Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17; cf. Dt.32:45-47; Matt. 4:4), as expressed in the first two articles of the Calvary's Statement of Faith.
- God created human beings as male and female (Gen. 1:27). The complementary, relational nature of the human race as "male and female" reflects the created order given by God when He created human beings "in His image" (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1, 3; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Jms. 3:9; cf. Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10). It is with joy in our finitude that we are to receive the gift of being either male or female.
- Scripture grants two life-enhancing options for sexual behavior: monogamous marital relations between one man and one woman (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:18, 21-24; Matt. 19:4-6; Mk. 10:5-8; cf. Heb. 13:4) or sexual celibacy (1 Cor. 7:7; Matt. 19:12). Either is a gift from God, given as He wills for His glory and the good of those who receive and rejoice in His gift to them.

- In Scripture monogamous heterosexual marriage bears a significance which goes beyond the regulation of sexual behavior, the bearing and raising of children, the formation of families, and the recognition of certain economic and legal rights, all of which are important. Marriage between a woman and a man is emphatically declared in Scripture to create a “one flesh” union (Gen. 2:23-24; Matt. 19:5), which in turn signifies the mystery of the union between Christ and His body, the Church (Eph. 5:22-33). This means that the foundational understanding of marriage is as a covenant grounded in promises between a man and a woman which finds its divinely intended expression in the “one flesh” union of husband and wife, and between the “one flesh” union of husband and wife and God (cf. Prov. 2:16-17; Mal. 2:14; Eph. 5:31-32).
- All of human existence, including our sexuality, has been deeply damaged by the fall into sin (Gen. 3; Rom. 3:23; 5:12). We all are sinners, broken in some measure by this fall. Though Christians are rescued, reconciled, renewed and in process of being transformed, this brokenness also affects us in that we groan, as the whole creation, eager to experience final redemption knowing at present we live in a not-yet-glorified state (Rom. 8:22-23).
- Everything, from our environment to our bodily genetic code, has been ravaged by sin and the fall. Whether the homosexual attractions people experience are the product of their environment, their genetics, or another source, they are not what God intends and so do not render homosexual behavior legitimate.
- Temptation, including sexual attractions, is not sin. Sin is yielding to temptation. Jesus himself was tempted, yet without sin (Matt. 4:1-11, Heb. 4:15).
- The Scriptures have much to say about sexual behavior, from the beautiful affirmations of the Song of Songs to the clear prohibitions found throughout the Bible (e.g., Rom. 13:13-14; 1 Cor. 5:1-2; 6:9-10, 15-18; Gal. 5:16-21; 1 Thess. 4:3-8). The Apostle Paul affirms that among believers “there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality” (Eph. 5:3). All homosexual behavior is specifically condemned as sin in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (Gen. 19:4-11[cf. 2 Pet. 2:6-7; Jude 7]; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Judges 19:22-25; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Tim. 1:8-11). This includes both male and female homosexual activity, both the more passive and more active roles in homosexual practice, and all varieties of homosexual acts.
- The gospel is full of grace and truth. It is an offer of grace and forgiveness to sinners as well as a call to live a holy life. It empowers us in the struggle to resist sin, including sexual sin (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 4:20-24; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; Tit. 2:11-13).
- The church is to be a new community that resembles a family of brothers and sisters united in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit displaying deep relationships of love (cf.

1 Cor. 12:12-13; Rom. 12:10; 1 Tim. 5:1-2). Celibacy and singleness is to be celebrated and affirmed within the church family.

Implications:

Based on these biblical affirmations, we live and minister with pastoral and practical implications.

- We Christians who attempt to follow biblical mandates on sex and marriage are not immune to expressing our own sexuality in sinful ways, for "all have sinned and fall short of God's glory" (Rom. 3:23). We must always be mindful of this and humbly relate to others accepting that we all are fallen creatures.
- At the same time, all human beings deserve to be treated with dignity and respect because each of us bears the image of God. Those who do not live according to this standard, including each Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgendered (LGBT) person deserves this dignity and respect no less than any other, and we, as Christians, should demonstrate this in our thoughts, speech, and behavior. Speech, including humor, which is demeaning, has no place in the Christian community. Likewise, this means we oppose any mistreatment of those who identify as LGBT.
- We must carefully distinguish between same-sex attraction, sinful lust, self-selected identification, and sexual behavior. It is not a sin to be tempted in the area of sex. Jesus himself was tempted, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). He sympathizes with our weaknesses, and he promises to provide a way of escape in every temptation (1 Cor. 10:13).
- We at Calvary will seek ways to minister to and support those among us who struggle with same-sex attractions, and those who have family members or others close to them who identify as LGBT. We will also seek ways to reach out in love to those in our society who identify as LGBT.
- We regard marriage as a good creation of God, and marriage within the Church as a rite and institution tied directly to our foundational belief of God as creator who made us male and female. We also regard marriage as a sacred institution which images the mysterious and wonderful bond between Christ and His Church. To us, then, marriage is much more than merely a contract between two persons (a secular notion). It is a covenant grounded in promises between a man and a woman which finds its divinely intended expression in the "one flesh" union of husband and wife, and between the "one flesh" union of husband and wife and God (the divine design). We therefore will only authorize and recognize heterosexual marriages.
- Because we see Scripture defining sex as reserved for a lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual marriage, we understand co-habitation, or any sexual relationship, between unmarried couples, to be outside of God's plan.

We will continue to welcome and minister to those living outside of this sexual ethic, reaching out with the love and grace that is found in Christ, even while we seek to uphold this Scriptural perspective with regard to sexuality. Jesus welcomed those who are not living according to God's plan even while He desired to transform their hearts and change the trajectory of their lives.