

Human Sexuality

Purpose

This document is intended to provide the congregation of First Christian Church of Greeneville, TN with a Scripturally-based presentation of our local church's stance on the issues of sexuality, especially in the case of so-called "same sex marriage."

Sexuality is a beautiful, God-given gift. It was designed by Him for use within a committed marriage relationship between a man and a woman and was intended for the good of the human race. However, throughout history people have abused this gift and used it in God-forbidden ways (Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 18:6-23; 20:15-19; Deuteronomy 27:21; Romans 1:26-27), willfully engaging in all types of sexual sin as evidenced in both the Old and New Testaments (Numbers 25:1-2; 1 Corinthians 5:1; 7:2; Matthew 5:27-28; Colossians 3:5; 1 Peter 4:3).

Marriage is the original and foundational institution of human society. It was established by God as a one-flesh, covenantal union between a man and a woman. Marriage is intended to be life-long (until separated by death), exclusive, monogamous, faithful, and generative in nature (designed for bearing and rearing children). It is to reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church.

Scripture quotes/references are from the ESV (English Standard Version).

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We affirm the following:

Our views of this issue flow from our commitment to God (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37-38) and to His Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17; cf. Deuteronomy 32:45-47; Matthew 4:4).

God created human beings in His image as male and female (Genesis 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.”

Jesus confirmed God’s creation of human beings as male and female in Matthew 19:4. The cultural claims to numerous genders or gender fluidity, or a gender “continuum” with unlimited genders, are foreign to the Bible.

Scripture grants two life-enhancing options for sexual behavior: monogamous marital relations between one man and one woman (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18, 21-24; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:5-8; cf. Hebrews 13:4) or sexual celibacy (1 Corinthians 7:7; Matthew 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 signifies the mystery of the union between Christ and His body, the Church (Ephesians 5:22-23).

All of human existence, including our sexuality, has been deeply damaged by the fall into sin (Genesis 3; Romans 3:23;

5:12; 8:23). We are all sinners, broken in some measure by this fall.

All homosexual behavior is specifically condemned as sin in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (Genesis 19:4-11 [cf. 2 Peter 2:6-7; Jude 7]; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Judges 19:22-25; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 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 (John 1:14-16). 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 (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 4:20-24; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Titus 2:11-13).

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” (Romans 3:23). We must always be mindful of this and humbly relate to others accepting that we all are fallen creatures.

Heterosexual Sin vs. Homosexual Sin

Sexual sin is unique and more harmful to one’s self than any other type of sin, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:18.

God created Eve for Adam and thereby established the pattern for human sexual expression (Genesis 2:21-25). It is normal and natural for males to be attracted to females, and vice versa.

Some heterosexual acts are sinful, including any sexual activity outside of marriage. All homosexual acts are sinful, according to Scripture (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9).

Scripture does not morally equate a committed heterosexual relationship within marriage (Genesis 2:22-24; Matthew 19:4-6) with a committed homosexual relationship, whether in a so-called “same sex marriage” or not.

Any desire for something God has forbidden is the result of sin. Sin has so infected our natures that what is evil often looks good. We are infected with sin, which causes us to have warped thoughts, desires, and proclivities. We are sinners by nature (Romans 5:12).

Heterosexual attraction is not sin, but heterosexual lust is. In Matthew 5:27-28, Jesus equates lust with the sin of adultery. Homosexuality is different, because homosexual behavior in any context is an action that the Bible forbids. Therefore, it is sinful to desire to commit homosexual acts.

The feelings of same-sex attraction are not always an active, willful sin, but they are still rooted in the fallen nature. Same-sex attraction is an expression of the sin nature.

John Piper explained it well, saying: “It would be right to say that same-sex desires are sinful in the sense that they are disordered by sin and exist contrary to God’s revealed will. But to be caused by sin and rooted in sin does not make a sinful desire equal to sinning. Sinning is what happens when rebellion against God expresses itself through our disorders”

(from the sermon “Let Marriage Be Held in Honor,” June 16, 2012).

Temptation and Sin

We are sinners because we all have a sin nature from the moment of conception (Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12).

There are two ways we are tempted: by Satan (Acts 5) and our own sin nature (James 1:13-14).

A person does not choose his desires, but those desires may still be sinful. Jesus explains in Matthew 15:18-19 that evil desires originate in the sinfulness of our own hearts.

A desire may be sinful in that it is rooted in the corruption of the sin nature and contrary to God’s revealed will, but it rises to the level of temptation when we are “lured and enticed” by our desires to sin against God (James 1:13-14; James 4:1-3).

Temptation is not the same thing as active, willful sin. Sin is yielding to temptation, even if only in our minds. Jesus himself was tempted (by Satan), yet without sin (Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrew 4:15).

Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15), though he did not sin.

No one is uniquely tempted, because we all face the same kinds of temptations (1 Corinthians 10:13).

God promises to provide a way of escape in every temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13).

We must all be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2) in order to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Change is possible through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16) and the transforming work of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 16:9-11).

We all must earnestly pray for God to change our sinful desires to conform to that which pleases Him and is in alignment with his character and nature, as David did (Psalm 51:10 and Psalm 139:23-24).

Identity

A person may acknowledge that she or he struggles with lust, sexual immorality, same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria.

However, a believer's fundamental identification is as a person "in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:4-10; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11) and not by the expression of their sexual desires.

A Christian should not identify as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans-gender, or other (LGBTQ+), because the identity of a Christian cannot be with a behavior defined in its essence by the rejection of God's design and/or commands.

Implications

Based on these truths, we live and minister with pastoral and practical implications:

We mourn with those who struggle with lust, sexual immorality, same sex attraction or gender dysphoria, and with their families, but as we grieve, we encourage behavior that follows the clear divine teachings of Scripture.

Though marred by sin (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12), the image of God is still intrinsic to every human being (Genesis 9:6). Therefore, all human beings deserve to be treated with dignity

and respect. As Christians, we should demonstrate this in our thoughts, speech, and behavior. This means we oppose any bullying or violence directed against those who identify as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans-gender, or other (LGBTQ+).

We in the church must seek ways to minister to and support those among us who struggle with lust, sexual immorality, same sex attraction or gender dysphoria, and those who have family members or others close to them who struggle with these things.

We in the church must seek ways to reach out in love to those in our society whose struggle with lust, sexual immorality, same sex attraction or gender dysphoria, and/or those who do not agree with the teaching of Scripture on this matter.

We regard marriage as a good creation of God and marriage within the Church as a covenant and institution tied directly to our foundational belief of God as creator who made us in His image, male and female. We also regard marriage as a sacred institution which reflects the image of God by reflecting the mysterious and wonderful bond between Christ and his Church. To us, then, marriage is much more than merely a contract between two persons. We therefore will only authorize and recognize heterosexual marriages.

Only such marriages which fit the definition above may be conducted on First Christian Church property and/or officiated by members/staff of this congregation.

Anyone is welcome to attend services at First Christian Church. If a person desiring to become a member of First Christian Church is involved in any of the sinful behaviors

described above, he or she will be asked to repent and commit to a life of sexual purity. Any person willing to make such a commitment is accepted into membership. If a member of First Christian Church is found to be engaged in any of the sinful behaviors described above, he or she is asked to repent and commit to sexual purity. Those willing to repent are guided to counseling services and support groups that are available to help them overcome their temptations. Those unwilling to repent may face discipline (see position paper on Church Discipline).

First Christian Church holds a definition of marriage that is intimately connected to other foundational matters of our faith. Therefore, we regard any restrictions and definitions we apply in our church concerning marriage to be an exercise of the freedom of religion clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Content adapted from:

- http://www.salemefc.org/images/uploads/Position_Paper_-_Mariage_and_Sexuality.pdf
- <https://www.southeastchristian.org/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/same-sex-attraction.html>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/transsexualism-gender-identity-disorder.html>

For more explanation, see our series on “Human Sexuality” (late 2022) on Brown Bags & Bibles, at fccgreene.org/bbb.