

ABOUT MARRIAGE & SEXUALITY...

Over the past several decades, marriage and sexuality have come to the forefront of cultural conversations. Because our sexuality and intimate relationships are so personal to each of us, discussion about these topics tends to make our emotions, the volume of our voices and the vitriol of our rancor escalate. Even within the church and faith community, the conversation between people who love Jesus yet disagree about specific aspects of marriage and sexuality can become far less than a positive Christian witness. With this in mind, it is with humility and in good faith that we present the NLAI statement of belief regarding marriage and sexuality.

NLAI's statements of faith, theological framework for ministry, daily decisions and practices are born out of a traditional view of the authority of Scripture (the Bible), and interpretation of Scripture informed by prayer, respected theologians and scholars throughout centuries, and the Holy Spirit. We acknowledge that intelligent believers in Jesus Christ have varying views. We also believe that followers of Jesus can love and respect one another despite our disagreements even though the practical living out of our varying beliefs will cause friction between us from time to time.

Based on the Scriptures cited below and the lack of others that would cause us to draw into question their straightforward interpretation, NLAI believes the following:

- Men and women can fully honor God with their lives through either marriage or singleness.
- Romantic, sexual relationships are a gift from God, reserved for the context of marriage.
- Biblical marriage is a covenant union between a man and a woman.
- Those who are married are called to remain faithful and pure to his or her spouse physically, emotionally and spiritually (in thought, word and deed), and to diligently resist divorce.
- The effects of sin in our world have entered the genetic and reproductive process (See Psalm 51:5), and the sins of others wound and drastically affect each of our lives. Therefore, we all have predispositions toward behaviors that God says do not lead to the best for us and we all are driven at some level by coping mechanisms that attempt to alleviate the pain in our lives. This makes our actions very understandable and deserving of compassion, grace and love from one another, even while these actions remain disobedient to God's call on our lives.
- We all sin and fall short of the glory of God and are in need of the saving grace of Jesus Christ, which we receive through repentance and belief. We are called not to judge others, but to speak the truth in love to one another. When we do not agree on specific truths, it does not negate the command to love.

In conjunction with this Biblical view of marriage and sexuality, NLAI deeply believes and must express and adhere to the following:

- Our work is with children and adolescents who have been physically, emotionally and sexually abused. This creates a great deal of confusion about their value, what love really is, and about their own sexuality. We therefore do all we can to reduce that confusion while they are healing from the trauma they have experienced. This means that our decisions and policies remain consistent with our beliefs so as not to introduce further confusion.
- Cultural and political agendas have supercharged the issue of marriage and sexuality, which makes difficult our effort to disagree with compassion, love and respect. We also understand our policies are likely to be viewed as personal rejection or attack, though this is certainly not our intention. We do our best to be people dealing with people rather than a side dealing with an issue. We understand that our specific ministries may not be the best options for serving God if one disagrees with our beliefs about marriage and sexuality. Yet there remains ways to help impact the lives of children in crisis indirectly if you do not agree on our interpretation and understanding.

In light of all that has been stated here, NLAI must limit direct participation in short term mission teams, internships, career missionary service, and organizational employment to those who are not living a lifestyle congruent with biblical foundations of marriage and sexuality as we understand them. This includes but is not exclusive to actively, unrepentantly engaging in extra-marital sex, homosexuality, and pornography. Those who are currently living in such a biblically incongruent manner may participate in the work of NLAI through prayer, encouragement of those serving, and giving financially, but may not serve directly in our ministries.

Gen. 2:24-25; Psalm 51:5; Matt. 19:1-6; Eph. 5:22-31; Gen 19:1-11; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Tim 1:8-10