

Marriage & Sexuality Position Paper

Summary

We believe that every part of our lives is to be lived for the glory of God. Whether the choice is in regards to food or sexual expression the highest priority of the church, as a whole and the sum of individuals, must be God's glory. Therefore, for the glory of God and in submission and obedience to the Scriptures, the Grace Brethren Church of Waynesboro wholeheartedly and without reservation affirms marriage of one man to one woman to be the only biblically faithful and permissible form of marriage. We will not cower in the face of cultural or political pressure, nor vacillate from this position. We are obligated by the Scriptures to proclaim the whole counsel of God regardless of popularity and will do so graciously, lovingly, and in a manner that glorifies God and exalts Jesus Christ well.

What is Marriage?

The Bible defines marriage as one man and one woman covenanting their lives to one another till death (Genesis 2:24-25; Ephesians 5:22-33). Marriage is not a human invention. Rather it is a God ordained institution that he created and blessed (Gen. 2:24-25). This understanding of marriage from the Old Testament is affirmed by Jesus Christ and the other New Testament writers (Matthew 19:3-6; Mark 10:6-9; 1 Corinthians 7:1-40; Ephesians 5:22-33).

Furthermore, marriage represents the relationship that Jesus Christ has with his church. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:22-33 clearly articulates that the marriage relationship between a husband and wife illustrates the relationship that Jesus Christ has with his bride, the church. We celebrate and promote monogamous, heterosexual, covenantal marriage because it is the only biblically faithful representation of the relationship between Christ and the people for which he died.

Temptation and Practice

It is important here for us to differentiate between the temptation of sexual immorality and the practice of sexual immorality, or any sin for that matter. Temptation is not a sin. Jesus himself was tempted and yet never sinned (Matthew 4:1-17; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13; Hebrews 4:14-16). Indulging in, or saying yes to, temptation is, however, sinful (James 1:12-15) and there are millions of believers that are battling the temptation of sexual immorality every day. This battle is fought by the power of

the Holy Spirit and is a battle believers can have victory in. Therefore, we see a stark distinction between the believer in Christ who is battling the temptation of sexual immorality and the individual whose lifestyle indulges in and practices sexual immorality. We also see the same stark distinction between the believer fighting drunkenness, gossip or anger, and the individual who indulges in and lives a lifestyle of drunkenness, gossip or anger.

Why Not Loving, Committed, Homosexual Marriage?¹

It is the consistent and clear teaching throughout the Scriptures that homosexuality is sinful and not glorifying to God. From the Law and the historical accounts in the Old Testament where Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed because of their immorality to the explicit writings of the New Testament, homosexuality has never been accepted by God as an appropriate form of sexual expression. The only appropriate form of sexual expression is between one man, and one woman in the covenant relationship of marriage. Any sexual expression outside of covenant marriage, whether by oneself or with others, is sexual immorality and sinful. For these reasons we cannot honor, celebrate, or condone any sexual expression or relationship where sexuality is expressed in a sinful way.

Why We Cannot be Indifferent

We cannot be indifferent in this matter because the Scriptures are clear that those who practice sexual immorality, of any kind, will not inherit the kingdom of God; that is, they will not be saved and spend eternity with Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 1:18-32; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Timothy 1:9-11; Jude 7; Revelation 21:8)². As the Church we have been commissioned as disciple making ambassadors of reconciliation (Matthew 28:19-20, 2 Corinthians 5:20-21). It is our mission to present the good news of Jesus Christ to those dead in their sin (Ephesians 2:1-3) and implore them to be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20). We cannot, therefore, celebrate, condone, or stand idly by while people are making decisions that will leave them separated from God for all

¹ It is our conviction from Scripture that homosexual "marriage" is not marriage at all. However, because of modern cultural language this term will be used.

² Note: there are many sins listed in these lists. Homosexuality and sexual immorality are not the only ones.

Marriage & Sexuality Position Paper

eternity. We love our Lord and Savior too much to demean his death on the cross by celebrating the destructive choices of those dead in their sin. We must warn. We must intervene. We must pray. We must proclaim the Gospel.

Why Grace is Greater

Any statement dealing with the uncomfortable truths and eternal consequences of sin must also speak to the gloriousness of our Savior and of the good news of the Gospel. Everyone, without exception, was born sinful and has made personal choices confirming the true identity of their nature. The Scriptures tell us, in Ephesians 2:1-5 that the unsaved are...

"...dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience--among who we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved--..." (Ephesians 2:1-5).

God's grace is greater than the very worst of sin and his love and mercy overcomes the hardest of hearts. It is God alone who saves. It is God alone who makes alive. It is God alone who pours out his mercy on children of wrath. There is no sexual sin too great to be forgiven. There is no sexually immoral choice that cannot be repented of. There is no sexually immoral lifestyle that extends beyond the reach of our gracious and merciful God. However, there is a time when sin will not be forgiven, a time when choices cannot be repented of, and a time that a lifestyle of immorality will reap the full wrath of God. That time, for the unrepentant, is after one draws their last breath. Hell is real and those who refuse to repent of their sin and confess Jesus Christ as Lord will spend their eternity there.

While the church must warn regarding the consequences of sin it must also proclaim salvation in Christ Jesus. "...There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) God's grace is greater than any sin!

You are Not Alone

Battling believer, you are not alone! You are a part of a whole host of sinners that have been saved by the grace of God and are, by his power, fighting to glorify him in all that we do. We believe that the gospel message that led us to salvation is the very same message that will sustain us (Romans 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-2). Thus we work hard by the power of God that works within us to will and work for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13).

If you are not a believer, we pray you will find our church, its people, and digital resources, full of grace and truth. We are actively seeking to demonstrate the grace and mercy we have received to everyone we meet. Regardless of the struggle you face and the guilt and shame you may bear we know that Jesus can and does heal all wounds. God desires to lead us in ways that maximize our flourishing, and glorify him. His "rules" are not burdensome, but rather free us from the burden of sin and the unbearable weight of trying to do things our own way. So we invite you to surrender to God.

Final Words

If you are reading this paper and wondering what our church believes we pray this position paper encourages you. We pray that this paper clearly demonstrates that we do not hate anyone nor do we dismiss their genuine emotions, struggles, and questions. Whether you ever attend our church or not, we want to be known as a church that believes the answer to all of life's questions is found in the Bible and as a church that is gracious to all.

With Grace, For Grace, and Because of Grace,

The Overseers of Grace

Practical Implications (see below)...

Marriage & Sexuality Position Paper

- We will do everything in our power to promote, encourage, and strengthen biblical marriages and families.
- We will do everything in our power to explicitly communicate the Gospel and exhort our members/attendees to treat others the way they have been treated by Christ.
- While not affirming the behavior of homosexuality, bisexuality or the trans-gendered we will not support any organization or individual that engages in the threatening, bullying, insulting, or harassment of any persons.
- We will gladly welcome individuals who identify themselves as homosexual, bisexual, and trans-gender at our worship services and/or events.
- We will gladly help any person struggling with gender identity and/or same-sex attraction find hope, freedom, and healing in Jesus Christ.
- We will gladly welcome into membership any born-again believer who, with an attitude of humility and repentance, is actively battling against all sin, including sexual temptation.
- We cannot welcome into membership an individual who practices homosexuality, bisexuality, or claims to be trans-gendered.
- Our Pastors and facilities/property are available, by donation only, for biblical marriages.
 - Our Pastors will not marry a couple that is expressing sexuality, or gender identity, in any manner that not consistent with the biblical norms/commands of monogamous and heterosexual relationships.
 - Our Pastors will not marry a couple who is living together or engaging in sexual immorality before they are married.
 - Our Pastors will not marry a couple where one individual is a believer in Jesus and the other is not (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).
 - At their discretion our Pastors may choose to marry a couple where both, heterosexual, individuals are not believers in Jesus. This is not a relationship forbidden by the Scriptures and provides an opportunity to discuss the beauty of marriage and the Gospel.
- We will invite all persons living sexually immoral lives, regardless of how it is expressed, to repent of their sin and believe in the Gospel.



GRACE