



## Marriage and Sexuality

In modern times as well as in ancient ones the issues regarding marriage, divorce, gender and sexuality are among the most relevant, painful and confusing issues confronting those who choose to follow God and live obediently to His instructions in the Bible. It is our desire as a church to be faithful to God's word and yet display love toward all people at the same time. This document is just one way in which to explain our views and beliefs as a church. We believe that this still can't answer all questions or be summarized so easily. This is why our entire purpose as a church and the way in which we function also plays a vital role as a visible testament to what we believe and teach. When we are called to live a certain way it embodies our belief that as Christians we exist to rethink life the way God intended in all areas including marriage and sexuality.

Currently our culture has heightened the tension within these topics causing conflict with those who choose to follow the Bible, those who don't, and confuse some who might be trying to wrestle through all of it. The "hot topic" society has created primarily is based upon the freedom for individuals to choose what image they want to be or they want to freely express themselves as. However, even though all of us are created with the free will of choice, those who choose to follow God are not given the freedom to live in contradiction to what He instructs of us. The Bible tells us at the very beginning:

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. - **Genesis 1:26-27***

For centuries scholars and teachers of the Bible have believed and taught that God made it clear that both male and female are needed to fully reflect the image of God. Both male and female are created with differences that are all part of God's good creation, and it was male and female that God gave the first command in scripture to:

*And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, - **Genesis 1:28***

God's blessing is part of His good gift of sexuality to us. God's creation was mandated to multiply and fill the earth and it had a blessing attached to it, because it was good. This however was purposed by God to take place within this male and female permanent, monogamous union:

*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. - **Genesis 2:24***

Scripture displays to us that God blesses our sexuality, and uses it to reveal a full image of himself when we are obedient to the design in which He created.

Therefore, the Bible displays to us that marriage is a union and covenant with God the Creator and his creation. We believe as the Bible displays that it is through marriage that male and female become husband and wife. Marriage thus becomes more than just a legal agreement. It is a covenant made between husband and wife to each other and, most importantly, to God.

## **Sin, the Fall, and Rebellion against God**

Though sexuality and marriage were part of God's design from the very beginning, sin entered the world. Because sin entered God's good creation humans now stand under sin, and the consequences of our choices from disobedience and rebellion.

*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, - Romans 3:23*

*To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." - Genesis 3:14-19*

*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned, - Romans 5:12*

Sin makes us guilty before God and separates us from Him both in this life and life eternal to come. Sin and evil are not simply the absence of good or the result of mistaken choices. Sin, disobedience, and even resistance towards God all are human refusals to carry out His purpose and plan. Sin is because of the fall is now a part of human nature and it distorts God's creation. However, we believe no part of humanity is as bad as it could be, yet no part is as good as it could be either.

What we must remind ourselves is that the image of God wasn't destroyed by the fall or our broken state. God always has an imprint on humanity and creation still has "good" in it. Sin has pushed out some of it's goodness and blinded others from seeing God's imprint.

Our sexuality, like the rest of us, is corrupted by sin and thus bent towards that which is against God's design and will. No matter what is happening around us, there should be no surprise that we find ourselves sexually broken and confused.

*Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.  
- Genesis 3:7*

Our sexual brokenness thus plays itself out in a multitude of ways: lust, self pleasure, pornography, sexual addictions, adultery, polygamy, rape, pedophilia, homosexuality, etc. Really any sexual activity that ignores God's purpose for creation and His design for the blessing of multiplying, procreating, and sex to happen in a covenant marriage relationship between a male and female.

This understanding of marriage and sexuality is consistently upheld all through the Bible. Marriage is always defined as between one man and one woman and the greatest expressions of sexuality are reserved for husband and wife in a covenant relationship with their Creator.

The Bible consistently tells that there are prohibitions against adultery,

*"You shall not commit adultery. - Exodus 20:14*

against polygamy,

*if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, - Titus 1:6 / 1 Timothy 3*

against inappropriate divorce,

*"When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, - **Deuteronomy 24:1***

*You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. - **Malachi 2:13-14***

the bible is also clear that all sexual activity outside of a heterosexual, monogamous marriage is condemned.

*Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. - **1 Corinthians 6:18***

Many assume that because Jesus doesn't address some of these issues on sexuality that He was teaching a "new" way for a "new" people. However, that is simply a misleading interpretation of Jesus and His teachings and an attempt to twist the Bible to our desire. Jesus tells us that:

*"I and the Father are one." - **John 10:30***

Through this declaration Jesus is reminding His listeners that He did not come to contradict the instructions of His father. In fact He came to reveal them even more. When asked about the issue of marriage and divorce, Jesus immediately responded by affirming the design of God's creation in Genesis 1 and 2. He made sure that the listeners understood that this was God's way from the beginning and nothing was to change that.

*But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'  
'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." - **Mark 10:6-9***

Throughout the New Testament letters to the church and those who claim to follow Jesus Paul tells those who believe to flee from any "sexual immorality", and uses this term over 55 times. This term in the greek (*pornea*) refers to any sexual activity outside of a heterosexual, monogamous marriage according to God's design at creation.

When reading the whole Bible as God's story the language used for (bride / bridegroom, husband / wife) to describe God's relationship with His people and Jesus' with the church is strictly the picture of a heterosexual marriage. (**Ephesians 5 / Revelation 19 / Isaiah 62:4-5 / Hosea 2:14-16, Jeremiah 3:8, Matthew 9:14-15, 25:1**)

## Homosexuality and Sexual Identity

Because the issues of homosexuality and same sex unions are currently the main and dominant conflicts within our culture and discussions, it is vital that we give specific attention to these concerns.

First, let us be clear that the Bible does not separate homosexuality from any other sexual sin. Any sexual sin outside of a monogamous marriage is against God's design. The church has been guilty of hypocrisy when it comes to sexual sin and separating the ones in which they choose to talk about or elevate above another. However, our approach is to faithfully and correctly handle God's word (**1 Timothy 2:15**) which displays that all sexual sin is one way of refusal for creation to live as the Creator intended.

The Bible does have several passages that speak directly against homosexuality, six to be exact. While many would argue that six isn't enough, the Bible is clearly not for it. It is essential to note that no where in the Bible is there any passage that speaks for or promotes a homosexual type of lifestyle. God's commands at the beginning of the Bible tell us:

*You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.*  
- **Leviticus 18:22**

While some would take the freedom to argue that this is Old Testament law in which we are not held under, let us give you a few quick insights to help you better understand this. First, many of the Old Testament laws are still in place today. Jesus, who was also Jewish, never did away with them, nor did His disciples. What is critical to understand is that certain laws only apply to certain people, and certain laws only apply to certain times. This is why "knowing" God's word is important. Some laws apply only to Jews, some only to women, some only to men, some only to Kings, while others only to Priests, etc. Some are only allowed if there is a temple, and some are required without annually without one. The importance is that you strive to keep the laws and instructions that apply to you as commanded by God. When it comes to Leviticus 18 there is a list of sexual activity that displeases the heart of God. None of them are separate from one another. All of them are written and recorded for us to know and follow because God despises them as they go against His intended purpose for creation. These commands are also for everyone to follow, not just some. Take note with how the chapter ends:

*But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you - **Leviticus 18:26***

God made sure tell the nation of Israel that these commands were for the "native" and for any "stranger" (non-jewish outsider), who would choose to follow God as well. Later in Scripture we find these same commands and instruction in the teaching of the disciples and apostles to the Church:

*For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. **Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.** Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural*



*relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. - Romans 1:24-27*

It is critical to note that when the disciples in Acts 15 were asked what would be acceptable and what would be prohibited from gentiles ("strangers") who want to enter into the faith of Israel, this was their response:

*"For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."  
- Acts 15:28-29*

The gospels tell us that Jesus had given his disciples the authority to bind and loose the laws and prohibitions for those who would follow Him (**Matthew 18:18**). This meant a special authority to affirm and uphold or to loosen the instructions they had come to know as it related to their lifestyle as a people set apart for God. It was Jesus' very disciples that made sure that those "strangers" to the faith understand that sexual immorality be prohibited from the lifestyle they were choosing to live. Their definition of sexual immorality was rooted and founded upon the teachings of Jesus himself and the writings of the Old Testament given by God to His people.

It is common today to argue that these passages are not referring to faithful, monogamous homosexuality people of today, but rather to a cultic or cultural acts that are no longer practiced by the majority of the homosexual community. Our response is always to go back to Genesis and rethink life the way God intended. God set sexual boundaries before the fall of humanity and any attempt to reshape that for personal happiness is a choice against the way in which God intended for things to be in the Bible.

### **Our Response to Homosexuality and sexual sin.**

We believe there is no difference in the good news of Jesus for a heterosexual or homosexual. The gospel is a call to repent of our rebellion, not just one type of sin, but of all our sin to enter into His Kingdom. Salvation is free and offered through Jesus Christ alone, so that we can all become a new creation.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. - 2 Corinthians 5:17*

We believe in the hope of transformation for anyone who calls upon the name of the Jesus. In Christ we receive our new identity again. Not the one we desire, but the one God desired since the beginning of creation. Those who choose to follow Christ are now identified as sons and daughters and are welcomed into a new family of God here on earth called the Church.

*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. - 1 Corinthians 6:9-11*



Love is our ultimate response. Yes we can be biblically faithful and still full of love. We believe the Church should be a place of love, hope and salvation to all people. A place where people are devoted to hospitality and generosity. **At Genesis our church is open to all people who are exploring issues of faith and life**, at the same time, we believe our personal preference is not the gospel. The bible is clear that the invitation of Jesus is to be for anyone willing to surrender themselves to Him and His way not their own. Loving does not mean we must “affirm” sinful behavior and attitude, according to the Bible. Although the definition of tolerance has changed in our culture, we choose to go above that idea when it comes to loving others and helping people see their need for hope found only in Jesus. As a Church we can do that and still stand firm in truth knowing that “tolerate” does not mean we must accept any type of sexual sin or non sexual sin that keeps us from being all God intended for us to be. Genuine love urges us to honesty and help where people need it most. In our Church we believe that God's word extends an invitation through Jesus to everyone, and it asks each of us to abandon our own ways of living and conform to His. In doing so we are reminded that our identity and likeness begin with Him and that we were each created to become more of an image bearer of God in this world. This is part of our purpose to **rethink life the way God intended**.

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. - Romans 12:2*