

## **Sexuality**

One of the great difficulties in defining a biblical understanding of sexuality in our modern context is the unseen, inner pain a person often carries behind the question. In recent history, the church has mishandled the topic of sexuality from a variety of angles. Often the Church's witness has centered on what forms of sexual expression Scripture is against instead of the dignifying, freeing sexual expression that Jesus and the Scriptures advocate for. This is what Jesus and the New Testament authors major in, and consequently our focus as well.

More personally, while the Church has historically held to an understanding of sexuality distinct from the surrounding culture, the expression of that belief in recent history has become alienating to those whose sexual expression does not line up with the Church's.

The tragedy of that shift has been that many have been made to feel alienated by the Christian Church because of sexual practice and/or sexual orientation.

Because of the complexity presented by recent history, we will succinctly define both our belief and how we express our belief, which carry equal importance.

## **Belief**

We believe in the historically Christian view of marriage and sexual expression; namely, that marriage is a lifelong one-flesh covenant union between two sexually different persons (male and female) from different families, and that all sexual relationships and expressions outside of marriage are sin.

We believe biological sex is an essential part of human identity.

We believe simply experiencing attraction to the same sex (or being gay) is not in itself a sin.

We believe the Fall has corrupted God's original intent for human sexuality in all persons; therefore, all people—straight or non-straight—experience corruption in their sexuality.

## **How we Express Our Belief**

The expression of this belief is often the more important question to people in search of a spiritual home: Will I (or one of my loved ones) be welcomed at Faith? And is there a barrier where that welcome is worn out?

Regardless of sexual practice and/or orientation, Faith welcomes all to worship with us. Jesus is the head of the church, and Jesus was uncompromising in teaching and calling people to align with His beliefs, as the pathway to “life to the full.” (John 10:10)

A group of Jewish teachers, called the Pharisees, were equally convicted of the truth of their beliefs, and held many beliefs in common with Jesus. So why was it that those who felt alienated by the Pharisees also felt so welcome by Jesus? Because of how each expressed common beliefs: the Pharisees did so in pride, as their primary concern was being right, while Jesus did so in love, as His primary concern was compassion for the person and story behind the belief.

The church is called the Body of Christ. We are a communal expression of Jesus’ heart, so both our beliefs and our expression of those beliefs should mirror Jesus’. When it comes to sexuality, we carry three important convictions that inform our expression:

**Our first responsibility is to be a living display of covenant love and sexuality.**

The Church was not founded to critique the surrounding culture but to form a distinct counterculture where “life to the full” is on display as an invitation to all. Therefore, our work is not to change anyone else’s mind or critique the world outside of our family, but to live with the sort of fidelity, service, and love within our own singleness and marriage covenants that we become a living witness to the “full life” Jesus offers to everyone.

**We lead with a heart of love and compassion for people.**

All forms of abuse, slander, dehumanization, or oppression toward fellow humans is an affront against God. Everyone has been created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27)

consequently every person is worthy of love and respect. The doors and the arms of our Church family are open to anyone, regardless of belief.

**We must differentiate between agreement and acceptance.**

One of the truly fascinating aspects of the life of Jesus is that the very people whose lives least aligned with His ethical teachings were most drawn to him. His dinner company was routinely made up of people out-of-alignment with his teaching. (tax collectors, prostitutes, insurrectionists).

In modern cultural rhetoric, agreement and acceptance are often used synonymously: “If you don’t agree with my ethical choices (belief), you don’t accept me (expression).” However, in Jesus, we observe the opposite phenomenon: Those who felt most accepted in His presence were those most obviously living in disagreement with His teaching.

Throughout the Gospels we find accounts of individuals, including the Apostles themselves, whose lives and lifestyles were out of alignment with Jesus. Jesus invited them to follow Him and graciously challenged them to live their lives as a part of His family.

Therefore, as a church we are committed to becoming a community linked to Jesus in both agreement and acceptance. We are unapologetically aligned with every word of His teaching. Equally, we are insistent on becoming the sort of community where those out-of-alignment with his beliefs (including sexuality) feel welcome and loved, and are graciously challenged to live life as a part of Jesus’ family, daily. (John 1:14)