



Sexuality



TAPESTRY
CHURCH

Position Paper

Sexuality

At the nexus of spirituality and culture, there is perhaps no more pressing or controversial issue than the one of human sexuality. Ironically, there are also fewer topics where the church is more profoundly silent.

For years, much of what the church has had to say on this topic has been framed in the negative. The unintentional consequence of this has been the cultivation of shame and silence around a gift that should be received with thanksgiving by believers and celebrated by the church.

At Tapestry, we want to speak with clarity and compassion on this vital issue. Achieving that goal requires reframing the conversation as a positive while removing the negative church-speak so often employed by Christendom on the topic of sexuality. The following paragraphs aim to begin that process.

ORIGINAL DESIGN

Perhaps the most influential biblical passage regarding human sexuality is Genesis 2 because it reflects God's original design. After viewing all that He had created, God declared it all "good" except for one thing.

"It is *not good* for the man to be alone. I will make him a *SUITABLE* helper."

The next two verses (19 and 20) explain that God had made all the wild animals and birds and he brought them to the man and Adam named them.

"But for Adam no suitable helper was found."

Not only was this about naming the animals, but apparently it was a type of interview process. Would this animal work? How about this one? No – among the wild animals, no suitable helper was found.

There are two Hebrew words used here that are powerfully informative in terms of God's master plan.

The first is the Hebrew word for "HELPER." It is the word *ezer* (ay'-zer) which means "one who helps." This isn't an inferior help, like a maid. It is a military term – like the cavalry coming. Later in the Psalms, we will be told that God is an *ezer* to Israel. So, Adam needed help.

The second word of note in the passage is the one we translate as "suitable." Adam could have received help from the animals, but none of them were found "suitable." What was it that made Eve suitable for Adam? Some say it was simply because she was another human. But the Hebrew adds more to the story.

The Hebrew word used here is *kenegdo*. This is a difficult word to translate into English because, first, it is rare. It is only used twice in scripture and both uses are here. Secondly, it is a difficult word because it is a compound word. It combines...

ke – which means "like" or "as"

and

neged – which means "opposite, against, or in front of"

The meaning of the combined "*kenegdo*" translates to "as opposite him" or "like against him." The point is that if all Adam needed was another human, then God would have made him a helper like (*ke*) him. But that wouldn't have been suitable. He needed someone who was like (*ke*) him – but also different (*neged*). He needed a helper (*ezer*) who was like him in some ways and different in others (*kenegdo*). One of the more obvious differences - the sexual difference - was ordained by God and becomes the basis for the Bible's commentary on sexual identity and sexual ethic.

So, God ordained that the "coming together" of a man and a woman is the manner in which the human race is perpetuated. We believe the perpetuation of the human race was not only God's will and intent but that

the sexual interaction of man and woman is His design to facilitate it. We also know that the sex act is pleasurable because God chose to make it so. He could have done otherwise, but He didn't. The pleasure of sex isn't necessary for pro-creation, and it wasn't a result of the fall. Therefore, we can surmise that our human sexuality and its attendant pleasure are part of God's original design for humanity.

MALE AND FEMALE

God, in his infinite wisdom, chose to make our sexual differences complimentary and appealing. Of course, there are exceptions and we will address those later in this paper. But generally speaking, God designed women to be sexually appealing to men and men sexually appealing to women. He gave women a form that appeals to men. Women are round whereas men are angular. They are soft whereas men are rough. Where men are visual, women tend to be sensual. Where men are primarily physical in their sexual encounters, women tend to be more emotional. And all of these are part of God's design. We are designed to be different precisely so that we appeal to one another.

Since this is part of God's original design, we at Tapestry reject the notion that anything about a woman's body is inherently sinful. We reject the notion that women are responsible for the sexual temptations of the men around them. For centuries men have forced women to hide their form and beauty under a variety of coverings - from cloaks to burkas to feed sacks - in an effort to quell their own sexual desire. However, that very desire was also designed by God.

Higher levels of testosterone in men make them crave sex from very early on. Most men at some point in their adolescence think to themselves, "there must be something wrong with me." But there isn't. The desire to attract the attention of women sexually is the hidden motive behind much of what men do. If testosterone was removed from the male profile, many of the innovations that push civilization forward would be lost. And as frustrating as this desire can be, it again is God's design.

Because the male sex drive is part of God's design, Tapestry Church is committed to removing the shame and stigma that adolescent boys and men experience as they navigate the treacherous task of managing their own sexuality. We are committed to speaking in healthy terms about the gift of that sexuality.

THAT WHICH GOD HAS BLESSED

In Numbers chapters 22 – 24, there is a fascinating story of Barak and Balaam. Balaam was a wicked prophet (which itself is a curious thing). He wasn't a false prophet – he really did hear from God, but he wasn't serving the Lord. King Barak of Moab summoned Balaam and offered him a handsome reward to pronounce a curse on Israel. Three different times after offering multiple sacrifices and calling on the Lord, Balaam disappointed Barak by blessing Israel rather than cursing her. Barak was furious. In summary, Balaam offered this explanation...

"I can only speak that which the Lord gives me. And I dare not curse that which God has blessed."

This is a word for us on the topic of sexuality.

Your sexuality is a gift from God. Like all gifts, it brings responsibility and even some difficulty, but the Church should not curse that which God has blessed. And neither should you.

Ladies, your bodies are a gift. And in the proper context, they can be a tremendous sexual blessing.

Men, your sex drive is a blessing and not a curse.

LGBTQ+

Few issues have been as poorly handled by the church at large as its treatment of the LGBTQ+ community. If the church has struggled to find language to discuss Biblically endorsed sexual relationships in ways that are life-giving, it has utterly failed in its attempts to address this issue with

people whose sexual orientation and/or desires are contrary to God's original design.

For heterosexual singles, the church has used negative language – “no,” “don't,” and “sin” – almost exclusively. As a result, many have adopted those negative terms and applied them to their sexual identity. Some have concluded it isn't just their sexual activity that is wrong, bad, or sinful – they are. They are wrong, bad, and sinful. They come to that conclusion because of the temptations they experience.

The logic goes something like this:

P1. I want sex outside of marriage

P2. Sex outside of marriage is bad

C. Therefore, I must be a bad person.

The truth, of course, is that while certain sexual activities are “off-limits” for the Christ-follower, the sexual desire itself isn't bad or sinful. God placed sexual desire within us, even if it gets distorted at times.

For members of the LGBTQ+ community, we have used even stronger and more isolating language like “abomination.” And like their heterosexual counterparts, they have personalized that language. They have been made to feel like an abomination. But gay men and women aren't an abomination. They are created in the image of God - loved and cherished by Him. Even in cases where the individual or church is doctrinally correct, the disposition is so often wrong. At Tapestry, we want to change the spirit of this discussion.

Some may (in an effort to remain doctrinally consistent) rightfully remind us that the scripture calls homosexual activity an abomination (Lev 18:22). And to that point, it bears reminding ourselves of the difference between the ministry the Holy Spirit was sent to perform and the ministry of reconciliation we Christians are charged with.

The Holy Spirit has a specific ministry regarding the unbeliever. Jesus outlines this ministry in John 16:8 (NASB):

“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”

Here we have assurance from Jesus himself that when the Holy Spirit comes, He will convict the world. The Christian is nowhere in scripture charged with such a responsibility. I'm reminded of our belligerent brothers and sisters who spend their time on street corners reminding the unbelieving passersby of their sin, how unrighteous they are, and that they will be judged...the three things Jesus specifically sent the Holy Spirit to do. Our confidence must be in the Holy Spirit to do what He was specifically sent to do on behalf of the unbeliever.

Instead, we are charged with the ministry of reconciliation. Paul describes this ministry in 2 Cor 5:18-20:

"Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

It is this ministry, one which begs the wandering heart to be reconciled to God that we have been charged with. Understanding that it is the kindness of God that leads to repentance (Rom 2:4). Paul, in his letter to Titus puts it best:

"Remind them...to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another." Titus 3:2-3 (NASB) Therefore, there is a difference between an act being an abomination in the eyes of God, and we Christians taking upon ourselves the mission of condemning those outside the church so severely and personally that they feel like they are abominations.

LGBTQ+ MYTHS

In addressing LGBTQ+ issues biblically, we need to first address some common misperceptions. Carrying these myths into our study of scripture

can distort our understanding of what the Lord is trying to tell us about these important matters.

First, in any legal document, there are "terms and conditions." These are passages that seek to create a common understanding – a shared vocabulary so that communication is clear. This is desperately needed within the church on this topic. When those in the Church use the term "gay," they are almost always using it in reference to gay sex, or homosexual acts. But when the world uses the term "gay" they are referring to an orientation or a predisposition. A man who is attracted to other men romantically and/or sexually may describe himself as gay, whether or not he has ever had a sexual encounter. This difference in terminology is an important one that can potentially create great confusion.

There are several "ex-gay" ministries claiming to help people convert from "gay" to "straight." But if you dig into the literature, you will find that they are attempting to change people's behavior from "gay sex" to "straight sex" or "gay sex" to "no sex." When you examine the testimonies of men and women who "used to be gay," they will almost always admit that they still struggle with those temptations and impulses – they are just choosing to live a life they feel honors God. In some cases that means marrying a person of the opposite sex. In other cases that means committing to a celibate lifestyle.

There are many gay men and women who have chosen a life of chastity because they believe it is what the Lord requires of them. Yet they still identify as "gay" or "lesbian" because their fundamental attractions haven't changed; they are still attracted to people of the same sex. While some may choose to live a life of sexual purity, it is extremely rare that one claims to have experienced change at an orientation level. They are still gay. And they love Jesus. Ironically, they are often judged as "abominable" by heterosexuals who are steeped in sexual sin of their own.

Secondly, the church has been convinced that at some level, homosexuality is a choice.

The argument goes something like this: "If a gay man or a lesbian woman is born that way, how can God condemn it or call it wrong? Therefore, it must be a choice."

The problem with this approach is that while preserving a Theology of God (i.e., God is perfect and doesn't make mistakes), it ignores the Theology of Sin (i.e., we are all born with sinful inclinations that lead us away from God). Some are natural-born liars, others are naturally selfish. Some of us are natural-born polygamists who are inclined to have sex with different people rather than just one. But not one of us chose the things that tempt us. Yet, in none of these cases are we justified in pursuing those things simply because the impulse is "natural."

Furthermore, when you consider the path that a gay man or woman must walk – the rejection, the confusion, the isolation – who would choose that? When you meet a homosexual man or woman, you are almost always encountering someone who would have changed their orientation long ago if they could. Being heterosexual is much, much easier.

Finally, if we are going to approach the Bible with integrity on this issue, we must identify and dispense with stereotypes that are prejudicial and not helpful. Humans often resort to stereotypes because it makes it easier to categorize people and, ultimately, dismiss them.

This has been a great sin of the Church in addressing issues relating to the LGBTQ+ community. The image of a man in black leather chaps, waving a rainbow flag, marching in a parade is a convenient way to dismiss an entire, complex group of people. But the LGBTQ+ community is more than its most extreme members. It is diverse and contains many people that each of us might unknowingly interact with every day. Among them are faithful parents, couples that have been together for decades, doctors, nurses, teachers, and principals.

And lest we forget, the Church suffers from this very same stereotyping. Like the LGBTQ+ community, the Church of Jesus Christ has been largely defined by its worst-behaved members (or by good members in their worst moments). When the world looks at us, they may see the Westboro

Baptist Church or an angry red-faced preacher screaming his politics at a TV camera or (worse), bilking the elderly out of their life savings. When you see Christians portrayed that way on TV or in movies, doesn't part of you want to scream, "Wait! That's not me... that's not what we're really like!"? That is how members of the LGBTQ+ community feel when their most flamboyant or most media-savvy members become the unelected icons who represent their community.

LGBTQ+ DOCTRINE

In formulating its sexual doctrine on LGBTQ+ issues, the church often invokes the "lobber passages" – the six passages of scripture that specifically address homosexuality head-on. Gay and straight theologians have exegeted these passages and come to some very different conclusions, and we will explore those conclusions in a cursory manner later in this paper.

At Tapestry Church, our doctrinal position isn't rooted in the so-called "lobber passages" as much as it is rooted in the "Original Design" argument made at the beginning of this paper. "Original Design" combined with the absence of any homosexual-affirming Biblical text gives us compelling and, we believe, clear theological guidance on this difficult and sensitive issue. Homosexuality, perhaps more normalized in ancient Greco-Roman culture than it is in modern-day America, was a contemporary issue for Christ, Peter, and Paul. It would have been easy for any New Testament writer to include an affirmation, a caveat, or some clarification regarding homosexuality in their teachings on sexual ethics, but they did not.

The New Testament sexual ethic is built on the orthodox Jewish sexual ethic. And that ethic remains unchanged across thousands of years; sex is reserved for a man and a woman within the confines of marriage. In all the early Jewish literature there isn't a single detractor. Not one. Instead, the Greek language, in which the New Testament was written, lumps everything other than heterosexual sex within the confines of marriage under a single category: porneia. The Greek word porneia translates into "sexual immorality." "Sexual Immorality" is any sexual activity that takes

place outside of the covenant of marriage. This applies to the heterosexual as well as the homosexual and includes sex between two single people, adultery, group sex, and any other variation that humans can dream up.

Since the scripture is utterly clear about "sexual immorality," without regard to homosexual or heterosexual behaviors, and since both testaments roundly condemn sex outside of marriage in multiple places, and theologians on both sides of this debate agree on that, there remains a single, simple question:

Given all that has been said in the previous section, one question remains: Does the Bible make allowance for a Christ-follower to engage in a lifelong, monogamous relationship with a person of the same sex?

At Tapestry Church, we believe the answer is no. After a thorough study of scripture and a careful examination of all the scholarly arguments, we cannot find a Biblical endorsement for same-sex marriage. We believe that gay men and women are called to a life of celibacy, and the church is called to provide for them a place of community and a spiritual family, just as it should for their heterosexual counterparts.

HOMOSEXUALITY IN SCRIPTURE

To be thorough, we want to address the six passages of scripture that specifically address homosexuality (the aforementioned "clobber passages"). We acknowledge at the outset that not all of these passages are as clear as they may seem at first reading. In each case, there are issues of culture and translation that make it difficult to know with certainty exactly what each passage means. Although our doctrine isn't rooted in these passages, it still seems appropriate to address them.

1. Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1-25)

In one of the Bible's most peculiar incidents, two angels visit Lot in his home in the city of Sodom. For reasons that aren't explained in the passage, the Bible says all the men of the city surrounded Lot's house, demanding the two angels be released to them so they might have sex with them. To spare the men, Lot offers the mob his two virgin daughters

instead. Ultimately, the two angels strike the mob blind and make their escape. Then God destroys the city.

At a glance, this story seems to be largely about homosexuality. After all, the city's name became the basis for our word "sodomy." But there is more going on here than meets the eye.

First, the passage says that "all the men" from the city – young and old – had come to participate in this gang rape. Are we to believe that the entire city was gay? If so, why was Lot there? And if he knew the entire city was gay, why would he even offer them his two virgin daughters?

It seems we are missing some important details. One helpful cultural point is that during this period, it was quite common for male warriors to rape the men they conquered. This act wasn't a "sex" thing. It was about dominance and emasculation. It was the ultimate defeat. In the story of Sodom, it is more likely that the visiting angels appeared threatening or presented an insulting presence, inciting the entire male population to retaliate. This line of thinking supports the mob's rejection of Lot's daughters as acceptable substitutes.

It's also worth noting that when addressing these events, the book of Ezekiel says this:

"Now this was the sin of sister Sodom: she and her daughters were arrogant, overfed, and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and the needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore, I did away with her as you have seen." Ezekiel 16:49-50

It is very conspicuous that Ezekiel doesn't say "This was the sin of Sodom: gay men." There is, after all, a Hebrew word that is translated as "homosexuality" and it never gets used in the passage. He also mentions that Sodom has "daughters," so it wasn't a town of all-gay men.

In discussing Sodom, Jude 7 says:

"...Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion."

So clearly there were sexual problems in Sodom. But it isn't at all clear that God destroyed Sodom because He couldn't abide the homosexuality. That simply isn't in the text.

2 & 3. Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13

These passages from the Levitical law are much more straightforward.

"Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable." Leviticus 18:22

If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads. Leviticus 20:13

These passages speak rather directly to homosexual acts. It bears noting that in the ancient world, while homosexual sex was common, the concept of someone *being* "homosexual," "gay," or "lesbian" didn't exist. Certainly, there were people attracted to those of the same sex, but the homosexual, gay and lesbian categorical orientations didn't enter the conversation until the 19th century. In the ancient world in which Leviticus was written, it wasn't uncommon for otherwise "straight" men to have the occasional homosexual interlude – particularly with someone of lower social status like a slave or a boy. And, as stated previously, the raping of conquered warriors was a common practice. For these reasons and more, gay-affirming scholars will disqualify these passages as irrelevant because they believe they are directed at these humiliating and exploitative types of sexual acts. These scholars argue that the passages in Leviticus are not directed at loving, monogamous, consensual same-sex relationships.

We believe the passages are clear and that they speak for themselves.

4. Romans 1:26-27

“Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way, the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.”

This passage is notable for a couple of reasons. First, it is the only passage in scripture to mention female homoeroticism. Secondly, it is, by far, the most difficult to navigate for those seeking a gay-affirming biblical view.

To begin with, Romans 1 is not written as a condemnation of gay people – it is written as a condemnation of all people, a point that is often missed. All of us – gay and straight – are condemned and in need of salvation. Apart from that salvation, Paul says, we have been given over to our own passions.

The gay-affirming interpretations of this passage focus primarily on two items: lust and pederasty. The first argument is that Paul wasn't condemning all gay sexual interactions, just those that flow from lust or selfishness. They argue that this passage doesn't apply to a loving gay relationship.

The other argument centers around a common practice in ancient Rome where men would engage in sex with teenage boys – an interaction known as pederasty. Pederastic relationships were common and often accepted and encouraged by parents. The affirming view of this passage claims that it is a rebuke of pederasty – not of mutual, loving same-sex relationships.

We disagree with these interpretations.

First, the language in this passage is mutual.

“Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.”

This is not the language of rape, incest, or pedophilia where there is clearly an offender and his victim. In Paul's citation, men engaged with other men, and both will be punished.

Secondly, in his most direct and challenging commentary on the matter, Paul summons a very common Greek legal term: *para physin*. It means "against nature" and everyone knew and understood this term in Paul's day. According to Paul, these same-sex encounters were a violation of God's original design.

Detractors will say that these encounters were "*para physin*" because they weren't coming from a place of love and mutuality. However, that interpretation belies the obvious physical context of the passage. In verse 24, Paul informs us that, "God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts... so that their *bodies* would be dishonored." And two verses later, Paul refers to the *acts* they committed as *indecent*, with no commentary on the emotions involved. In the end, we know that "*Para physin*" has enjoyed a long Biblical and extra-Biblical history and that its meaning was not ambiguous in Paul's day.

5 & 6. I Corinthians 6:9-11 and I Timothy 1:9-10

We have included these passages together because they have similar problems: language ambiguity. There is tremendous debate on what these Greek words mean, and gay-affirming scholars argue that where there is ambiguity, it is immoral to choose an interpretation that excludes LGBTQ+ people definitively. And they have a point.

"Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. 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.}" I Corinthians 6:9-11

There is a single Greek word that Paul uses here that the NIV renders "*men who have sex with men.*"

The King James Version interprets this word as "*effeminate.*"

The Revised Standard Version puts it this way: "*sexual perverts.*"

The word in question is the Greek term "*malakoi*" and its literal translation is "soft." "*Malakoi*" is used in Matthew 11:8 to describe "fine" or "soft" clothing. Unfortunately, Paul never uses this word in any of his other letters, so we can't confirm exactly what he means when he uses it. We know by its usage that it is included in a list of sinful acts, so it certainly means something more than wearing an angora sweater.

When we look at the Greco-Roman culture in which Paul was writing, we do find references to "*malakoi*" men, and in every case, it is used to describe the passive partner in a male/male sexual encounter. In one ancient reference, a man who shaves his chest hair to appeal to other men is referred to as "*malakoi.*" So, while this NIV rendering of this term is widely accepted as accurate, it is impossible to be absolutely certain.

The heavy lifting for gay-affirming theologians is to then figure out what interpretation of "*malakoi*" would make it sinful in the same way as thieves, slanderers, and the others who will not inherit the kingdom of God according to Paul.

"We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine" | Timothy 1:9-10

Of the six passages that address homosexuality, this might be the toughest to parse because Paul uses a Greek word here that is not used anywhere else in all of Greek literature. As a matter of fact, many scholars agree that

Paul created the word. And because it simply appears in a list of sinful acts, there is no context to help us.

The word is "*arsenokoites*."

It is a compound word that combines...

Arsen – which means "male"

And

Koites – which means "bed"

Paul seems to be addressing "men bedding men," or a man who sleeps with another man. This is not a huge leap because we do have other documented Greek compound words that combine in this way to describe a sexual act.

Doulkoites combines *doulos* (slave) with *koites* (bed) and it means, literally "one who has sex with slaves."

Metrokoites combines *meter* (mother) with *koites* (bed) describes "one who has sex with his mother."

So, to render *arsenokoites* as "one who has sex with other men" is not a stretch at all.

Still, people on the other side will say, "But you are building a theology of rejection on a word whose meaning we cannot know for sure!" And while there is some merit to the idea, our theology is not one of rejection and it is certainly not built on a (one) word.

Even more profound are those celibate gay men or women who would say, "This doesn't apply to me – I'm not having sex with anyone." And on that, we would agree.

Having made our case and declared our position, the final section of this paper will, as always, turn to affirmations and denials:

Affirmation and Denials

We affirm that our sexuality is a gift from God, intended to be received with thanksgiving by mankind and celebrated by the Church.

We deny that sexuality, sexual orientation, or sexual desire is inherently sinful.

We affirm that our sexuality, like every other aspect of our humanity, glorifies God and is intended to bring honor to Him.

We deny that sexual brokenness nullifies the beauty of the underlying gift of sexuality.

We affirm that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in His own image, equal as persons, and distinct as male and female.

We deny that divinely appointed male/female distinctions are fluid or a function of individual choice or self-perception.

We affirm that the two sexes and their sexual identities are part of God's original design.

We deny that cultural perceptions of masculinity or femininity are necessarily related to sexual distinctions. Some men have more feminine characteristics and some women have more masculine characteristics.

We affirm that God designed marriage to be a covenantal, lifelong union between one man and one woman.

We deny that God designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship.

We affirm that God's revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage

We deny that any affections, desires, orientations, or inclinations ever justify sexual interactions before or outside of marriage, nor do they justify any kind of sexual immorality.

We affirm that those who experience physical or psychological sexual ambiguities related to their biological sex are created in the image of God and intended to flourish in their Divinely assigned gender and sexuality.

We deny that physical or psychological sexual ambiguities related to a person's biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful life of intimate fellowship and joyful union with Christ.

We affirm that people who experience sexual attractions that are inconsistent with God's original design are in no way disqualified from living a rich and fruitful life as they, like all Christians, walk in purity.

We deny that the presence of desire or attractions that are inconsistent with God's original design places an individual outside the grace of God or the fellowship of the Church.

We affirm that sin distorts natural sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality. These distortions affect people of all sexual orientations, including heterosexuals.

We deny that anyone's sexuality ought to be a life-defining characteristic.

We affirm that because of the fall, every human will struggle to understand and manage their own sexuality and sexual expression. We are all born broken.

We deny that people choose their sexual orientation. We do not choose what attracts or tempts us.

We affirm that those who struggle with sexual brokenness are needful of the grace of Christ and the love of His bride, the Church.

We deny that the antidote to sexual immorality is simply self-denial or a prudish moralism. (The law always brings death.) The solution is, rather, sexual health, sexual wholeness, and sexual integrity.

We affirm that the loving proclamation of truth is an expression of God's mercy. The truth will set us free. The Church must be a place of love, acceptance, and the loving expression of sexual truth.

We deny that concealment, isolation, or separation from the Christian community is a solution to sexual brokenness for men or women of any orientation.

We affirm that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

We deny that sexual brokenness of any kind is beyond the reach of God's grace.