

The background features two overlapping, diagonal brushstrokes. The top stroke is primarily red with some blue at the edges, while the bottom stroke is primarily blue with some red at the edges. The strokes are thick and textured, suggesting a hand-painted effect.

Biblical Sexuality



FAITH
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The elders of Faith Presbyterian Church, in the midst of cultural questions surrounding sexuality, are committed to preaching and teaching a clear biblical message on these issues. This summary statement is provided to help us all as a church think biblically and engage personally on this issue so that we can effectively proclaim the Gospel to those around us. If this biblical summary challenges your view of the issues then we ask that you keep an open mind to consider this teaching, and we invite you to engage with us in ongoing conversation.

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Issues surrounding marriage and sexuality strike at the core of who we are and elicit strong opinions from inside and outside the church. In the midst of cultural debate about sexuality and marriage, we can feel overwhelmed or frustrated. Some try to ignore the issue or expect that mere condemnation will bring change, but transformational change never happens that way. Others want to let everyone live according to his own moral opinion, but this only achieves a façade of peaceful coexistence and ultimately rejects God’s authority in our lives.

In contrast, the Bible offers Gospel hope that is honest about our sin and honest about the solution. Only through faith in Jesus Christ do we find forgiveness and hope. In submission to Christ we proclaim both truth and mercy by understanding the place of sexuality within the biblical storyline.

Creation: God’s Design for Sexuality

Human sexuality is part of God’s good creation. God created us as sexual creatures (*Genesis 1:26-28; 2:23-25; Ephesians 5:21-33; Matthew 19:3-6*). Sex is a gift from God (*1 Timothy 4:3-4; Song of Songs 4*). Since God designed it for our good then we should listen to his commands regarding sex and marriage. Harvest USA, a Christian ministry “proclaiming Christ as Lord to a sexually broken world,” summarizes the biblical framework when it states:

*...our sexuality and its expression was designed by God at creation, and that our sexuality and its expression was part of God’s original and good design for mankind, and is clearly communicated to us in the Scriptures. Male and female were both created in God’s image, and we affirm that God’s perfect design for all sexual activity is between one man and one woman in the context of the marriage bond.*¹

¹ Harvest USA, “Doctrinal Statement,” www.harvestusa.org, Accessed 6/4/2013.

As creatures made in the image of God, we are therefore called to submit to his authority. Only in submission can we find true freedom. True freedom is not found in the “everything is permissible” ethic of our culture. True freedom is not found in doing whatever you want, but in doing what you were made for.

Our culture tempts us to find our identity in our sexuality and believe the lie that it defines our humanity and exists exclusively for self-focused pleasure. In reality, our identity can only be found in Christ, and in Christ we find the strength and the motivation to obey (*Colossians 3:3-4; Romans 8:9-14*).

This perspective then frees us to celebrate sex as a gift from God expressed only within the lifelong commitment of marriage between a man and a woman. Pastor Paul Tripp in his book *Sex & Money* explains the goodness of this design by highlighting that only in this context is sex “protected and purified by this commitment to tender, faithful, self-sacrificing, other-serving love.”²

² Paul David Tripp, *Sex & Money: Pleasures That Leave You Empty and Grace That Satisfies* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 108.

This perspective also frees us to view singleness as a gift from God (*1 Corinthians 7:7, 29-35; Matthew 19:12*). Because the expression of sexuality doesn’t define our humanity, our satisfaction and the meaning of life is not found in marriage. Our identity is found in Christ. A single Christian is called to a celibate life of sexual integrity in thoughts and actions because sexuality points to a greater reality. By finding contentment in our circumstances, we show the world that our ultimate hope is not in the temporal experience of a sexual relationship, but in the eternal relationship with Jesus Christ to which sex points.

Fall: Broken Sexuality

As sinners we have taken the good gift of sexuality and distorted it for our own selfish ends. Harvest USA offers this biblical summary:

We recognize that, as a consequence of the Fall, all men and women are sexually broken and thus relate in twisted ways to God, self, others, and nature. Therefore, all expressions of sexual activity outside of the bond of marriage are sinful and are a distortion of God’s good design. This includes all involvement with pornography, sexual fantasy, sexual addictions,

*adultery, homosexuality, gender distortions and any other sexual activity outside of marriage. All sexual sin grieves God and is offensive to His Holiness, and all sexual sin ultimately harms people, whether it is homosexual or heterosexual sin.*³

³Harvest USA,
"Doctrinal Statement"

As a result, the biblical command is to flee sexual immorality, to pursue holiness in our relationships, and to honor God with our bodies (*Acts 15:29; 1 Corinthians 6:18; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5*). It means we must promote strong marriages, guard against visual and emotional temptation, and come alongside one another in community.

One expression of sexual brokenness is homosexuality. And while this expression of brokenness is not inherently more sinful than the others, it is one where particular comment is necessary in today's culture. When we apply biblical teaching (*Genesis 19:1-9; Leviticus 19:22; 20:13; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:8-11*) to homosexuality we risk being called narrow-minded or bigoted, but we submit ourselves to the authority of God's word. As a church we affirm Harvest USA's biblical position:

*We believe that homosexuality is not what God wills for human beings made in His image. We affirm that both homosexual desire and behavior are expressions of mankind's fallenness, and like all other types of sexual sin, needs to be confessed, renounced and forsaken by those who would be followers of Jesus Christ. We believe that God has always called men and women out of homosexuality or other sexual sin patterns and into the new life of His kingdom through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Thus any attempt to claim, cultivate, or promote a gay identity for oneself is out of place in a confessing Christian since it necessarily competes with the holy identity in Christ that every believer has been given and must claim by faith. We believe that Christ gives to all who seek it a growing freedom from the compulsive pull of all sorts of sinful sexual fantasy and behavior. This does not preclude the possibility of serious lapses of love and obedience on the part of those who truly believe, but such must be evaluated in light of the ordinary path and process of sanctification in which God places all of His children. Such failure on the part of believers can never be taken as license to abolish the call to holiness or to allow a reinterpretation of the Scriptures that permits a 'gay Christian' theology.*⁴

⁴Ibid

Redemption: Ministering to a Sexually Broken World

The Gospel does not only announce the bad news of our sinful brokenness. The Gospel is good news for us. Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, even our sexual sins. There is grace for the sexually broken. Paul wrote to the sexually broken believers in the ancient city of Corinth saying, “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” (*1 Corinthians 6:11*). Instead of allowing us to suffer the consequences of our sexual failure, Jesus’ resurrection from the dead offers us the hope of eternity and calls us to bodily obedience.

So in hope we submit ourselves to the Lordship of Jesus. This means we will repent of our failure to measure up to God’s design and believe that Jesus offers resurrection hope. We turn from our sin and turn to Christ. Because in Christ we find forgiveness and we are empowered to obey by his Spirit.

In addition, the sexual brokenness of our culture provides us with opportunities to serve others as we proclaim the message of hope we have personally experienced. As individual believers and as the church we have the responsibility to proclaim the good news of the Gospel. We cannot allow questions of sexuality to only be political issues; they are intensely personal. They are about people who need the hope of Jesus. And we have the privilege to minister in his name.

We encourage all believers to engage in the public square as citizens and to love our neighbors through our civic and political involvement. But our primary mission as a church is to teach the truth of God’s commands and focus on the task of Gospel proclamation.

And each of us has a role to play in our day-to-day relationships. Personal conversations easily derail when discussing disputed moral questions, but here are some strategies to help focus the conversation on the hope of the Gospel. As you interact with those who may find the Bible’s understanding of sexuality to be strange, backward, or intolerant, focus on the question of authority. Ask questions to find out who your neighbor is trusting, and be willing to admit that your starting point is the truth of God’s word. And steer the conversa-

tion to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the central truth that needs to be believed (*1 Corinthians 15:1-4*). Turn the conversation to the ultimate questions of authority and the hope of the resurrection. This allows us to offer Gospel hope.

The brokenness of our culture—and the brokenness in our own lives—tempts us to despair. But we have great opportunities to proclaim the Gospel. The Gospel is the hope for those around us. It is the hope for a sexually broken world.

Resources

The elders and pastors of Faith Presbyterian Church remain committed to publicly teaching the biblical view of sexuality and marriage. We are also committed to personal ministry to those who struggle and those who want to serve others. Please contact an elder, pastor, or community group leader for ongoing help. And be honest with fellow believers as you come alongside each other in ministry. Our longings in the areas of sex remind us that we are not meant to serve on our own, but we are called to live in community with each other.

The following resource list offers a place to begin for ongoing help, but there are many more useful Christian resources available:

Books:

- ▶ Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God*, New York: Dutton, 2011. Chapter 8: “Sex and Marriage.”
- ▶ Gary Thomas, *Sacred Marriage: What If God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000. Chapter 11: “Sexual Saints.”
- ▶ Paul David Tripp, *Sex & Money: Pleasures That Leave You Empty and Grace That Satisfies*, Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.
- ▶ Harry Schaumburg, *False Intimacy: Understanding the Struggle of Sexual Addiction*, revised ed., Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997.
- ▶ Sam Allberry, *Is God anti-gay? And other questions about homosexuality, the Bible and same-sex attraction*, Croydon, UK: Good Book, 2013.
- ▶ Peter Hubbard, *Love Into Light: The Gospel, The Homosexual, and the Church*, Greenville, SC: Ambassador International, 2013.

Sermon Series:

- ▶ Corinth: A City in Chaos. Summer 2013.
<http://faithwilmington.com/media/audio/media-items/1/corinth-a-city-in-chaos>

Ministries:

- ▶ Harvest USA, “bringing the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to transform the lives of those affected by sexual sin.” harvestusa.org
- ▶ A Door of Hope Pregnancy Center, “free, confidential services to women facing unexpected pregnancies and young people making important relationship decisions,” adoorofhope.org



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