

Marriage and Sexuality

What do the Scriptures say about marriage?

- *The Scriptures declare that God created us male and female. Furthermore, the biblical record shows that sexual union was established exclusively within the context of a male-female relationship (Genesis 2:24), and was formalized in the institution of marriage. The partner for man was woman. Together, they were to become one flesh.*
- *In the New Testament, the oneness of male and female in marriage pictures the relationship between Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:22–33). The picture of marriage expands into something much broader, with the husband and wife relationship illustrating the relationship between Christ and the Church. Husbands are urged to lay down their lives in sacrificial love and protection. And, in this safe and cherished embrace of a loving husband, a wife should willingly submit to his loving leadership.*
- *Everywhere in Scripture the sexual relationship between man and woman within the bond of marriage is viewed as something natural and beautiful.*
- *No other sexual relationships are endorsed by the Scriptures—neither same sex relationships, nor relationships outside of marriage—and are acceptable in God’s sight.*

Grace Chapel holds to these biblical views of marriage. So then, what is our response and policy regarding an individual’s participating in the life of the Church with regard to their sexual identity and/or sexual behavior?

Regardless of whether homosexuality (i.e., “gay” or “lesbian”) is an innate immutable trait or a chosen behavior, the Scriptures expressly forbid sexual sin—whether heterosexual or homosexual—outside of marriage. The only place where sexual intimacy, the sexual act, can be performed without sin is within the bond of marriage. We further believe that “marriage” is expressly a covenant, monogamous relationship between one man and one woman. Therefore, we cannot help but call a heterosexual or homosexual relationship involving sexual intimacy, sin. Similarly, we would urge and pray that heterosexual and homosexual individuals would refrain from sexual intimacy outside of marriage – adultery or fornication – and believe those sexual urgings to be temptations to sinful behavior. We would call on homosexual and heterosexual individuals to refrain from sexual intimacy in all forms, to resist those sexual temptations and abstain from sinful behavior for the glory of God.

Serving in Ministry

We expect that all members and friends of Grace Chapel, who wish to serve their Savior and fellow believers, will be circumspect in their behavior, including all aspects of sexual behavior (e.g., lewdness, pornography, immorality, etc.), and will regularly confess their sins to God for forgiveness, seek counsel, support, and encouragement from Godly fellow believers, and spend time studying God’s Word for edification and training in righteousness. Note that this is the minimum standard for service. So, in the same way that we would not knowingly allow a heterosexual married person who was participating in an adulterous affair, or a heterosexual single person who was engaged in an ongoing immoral sexual relationship, to serve in any position or ministry, we would hold a homosexual person to the same standard. They should not be participating in any such acts of sexual immorality, and any such sin should be confessed, repented of, and put behind them. We do not expect perfection – otherwise none of us could serve – but we do expect that the Spirit of God and the Word of God will convict the sinner and lead to confession, repentance, forgiveness, and changed behavior, which are the fruits of Spirit-led transformation.

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Grace Chapel's mission, while including a desire to reach out to the world still apart from Christ, also reflects a keen desire to ensure that we adhere to and promulgate biblical principles in every aspect of our corporate life.

Baptism

We believe that baptism is open to all believers – whether homosexual or heterosexual. The purpose of baptism is to identify the person who is baptized with Christ, and to demonstrate publically that they have accepted Christ as Savior and are intending to live as a Christ-follower. It is intended for believers, Christ-followers who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ for their personal salvation. However, we would refrain from baptizing a person – whether homosexual or heterosexual – who is living a lifestyle of sexual immorality.

Membership

Membership at Grace Chapel includes the expectation, again, that the prospective member is living, to the best of their ability, a life that honors God, reflects biblical truth and values, abstains from sin, and is quick to confess known sin. A person – whether heterosexual or homosexual – who is living as such may take the steps to become a member of Grace Chapel.

Marriage/Weddings

At Grace Chapel, we believe marriage is a holy and solemn covenant relationship between one man and one woman. We would, therefore, prohibit services such as homosexual marriages, or even marriages between heterosexual individuals that are “unequally yoked” (i.e., one person a Christ-follower and the other not a Christ-follower). Given that, Grace Chapel will not allow its facilities to be used in any marriage other than between one man and one woman, “equally yoked.” Nor will we allow members of our pastoral or commissioned staff to officiate such a service. To condone such a marriage would be to put the church's stamp of approval on an activity that God prohibits.

On August 4, 2015, the Grace Chapel Elder Board adopted the National Association of Evangelicals' (NAE) position on same-sex relationships as stated in their “God Defined Marriage” June 26, 2015, letter/statement:

God designed marriage for humanity. As first described in Genesis and later affirmed by Jesus, marriage is a God-ordained, covenant relationship between a man and a woman. This lifelong, sexually exclusive relationship brings children into the world and thus sustains the stewardship of the earth. Biblical marriage — marked by faithfulness, sacrificial love and joy — displays the relationship between God and his people. [1]

While commentators, politicians and judges may revise their understanding of marriage in response to shifting societal trends, followers of Jesus should embrace his clear vision of marriage found in Matthew 19:4-6:

“Haven't you read,” Jesus replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his

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wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

Nothing in the Supreme Court’s *Obergefell v. Hodges* opinion changes the truth about marriage. What has changed is the legal definition of marriage, which is now at variance with orthodox biblical faith as it has been affirmed across the centuries and as it is embraced today by nearly two billion Christians in every nation on earth.

In its role as a moral teacher, the law now misleads Americans about the true nature of marriage. Evangelicals and other followers of the Bible have a heightened opportunity to demonstrate the attractiveness of loving Christian marriages and families. Evangelicals should renew their commitment to the sacrificial love and covenantal faithfulness to which Jesus calls all husbands and wives.

As witnesses to the truth, evangelicals should be gracious and compassionate to those who do not share their views on marriage. Those who continue to embrace biblical teaching on marriage will increasingly appeal to the First Amendment protection not just for abstract belief, but for the practice of their faith. The National Association of Evangelicals calls on Congress to enact laws, on the president to implement policies, and on the courts to render judgments that uphold the freedom and human rights of all Americans.

[1] *Theology of Sex* (Washington, DC: National Association of Evangelicals, 2012), 10.