

Marriage and Human Sexuality

At Grace Church of Orange, we always have, and always will, look to God and His Word as the Supreme authority over our lives and the life of His Church (Psalm 19:7-11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21). Because of this, we have clearly defined where we stand on this issue as a church, and want to share it for clarity and comfort.

We are committed to a biblical worldview that seeks to glorify God, recognizing and affirming Christ as King in every aspect of the created order and in every sphere of human endeavor. There is nothing over which He is not preeminent and to which He is irrelevant. As such, our mission at Grace Church is to equip believers in mind and character, to help them connect the rigorous work of the mind to the Spirit's renovating work in the heart – thus facilitating an intellectual and spiritual transformation. The desired outcome is an inherently consistent inner life manifested in a lived-out spirituality that we call character.

In order to facilitate this process of Christ-like character development, we knowingly and voluntarily embrace and commit to community standards of conduct that we believe are congruent with biblical standards and conducive to a life of spiritual integrity. We aspire to be a church where thoughtful and caring engagement with the deepest questions of life and personal identity can be examined in light of the realities of our common human sinfulness and brokenness. At Grace Church, it is our desire and commitment to help each other to live "in Christ," to develop a Christ-like maturity in our daily practices, and to encourage a healthy, vibrant Christian community.

In keeping with our mission, vision, and values, and our commitment to biblical fidelity, all those who regularly attend Grace Church are expected to follow the teachings of Scripture. We believe that the only authoritative and trustworthy norm for proper moral judgments is what God has revealed in his Word. Therefore, Grace Church of Orange affirms that sexual intimacy is designed by God to be expressed solely within a marriage between one man and one woman. This view of sexuality and marriage is rooted in the Genesis account of creation, reflected in the teachings of Jesus Christ Himself, and is maintained consistently throughout Scripture. It is a view based on the biblical teachings of monogamy – that God designed sexual union for the purpose of uniting one man and one woman into a permanent, lifelong, one flesh union in the context of marriage. God created two complementary forms of humans, male and female, to bear His image together (Gen. 1:27-28), and ordained that the first human pair were to become one flesh (Gen. 2:23-24). These, and other similar passages, show that God views sex, procreation, and marriage as good, and that male and female are necessary counterparts – differentiated partners – in sexually complementary roles. Sexual intimacy and the sexual union of intercourse between a man and a woman are intended for a purpose – to join one husband and one wife together into one flesh in the context of marriage.

Our marriages on earth model the relationship between Christ and His bride, the church (Eph. 5:31-33), a melding that the Apostle Paul calls "a profound mystery." This God-initiated

oneness, as detailed in Genesis, is clearly recognized and affirmed by Jesus in terms of the marital union of husband and wife (Matt 19:4-6). Any sexual intimacy outside marriage violates God's design for marriage, and is thus to be understood as one of the disruptive consequences of the fall (Rom. 1:18-32).

Thus, God's design for marriage and sexuality is the foundational reason for viewing acts of sexual intimacy between a man and a woman outside of marriage, and any act of sexual intimacy between two persons of the same sex, as illegitimate moral options for the confessing Christian. Sexual relations of any kind outside the confines of marriage between one man and one woman are inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture, as understood by Christian churches throughout history. On the other hand, chastity in the form of sexual purity for the unmarried person and chastity in the form of sexual faithfulness in marriage are blessed and affirmed. Therefore, as part of living out a consistent, biblical spirituality, one dedicated to the pursuit of Christ-likeness, all those who attend Grace Church are expected to avoid sexual intimacy outside of marriage and to refrain from encouraging the same in others. Indeed, whatever one's personal tendencies and desires, the call of Christ on our lives is the same: sexual purity manifest among the married as complete faithfulness and by those who are unmarried by living a chaste life (1 Thess. 4:3-8).

Sexual purity honors God. For those in our church who are attracted to persons of the opposite sex and struggle to maintain sexual purity, as well as for those in our church who struggle with same-sex behavior, same-sex attraction and/or sexual orientation issues, we aspire to be a gracious community that promotes openness and honesty. We pledge to extend compassion and care, providing accountability and assistance as we support all those who attend our church in their desire to live consistently with Christian teaching. We are committed to engaging difficult conversations with humility and love, prayerfulness and care, and all those who participate in the life of this church are expected to treat one another with respect and Christ-like compassion. Hateful, bigoted, or destructive interactions will not be tolerated.

We believe, in accordance with Scripture, that we are all sinful and that we sin in different ways. The God who knows us intimately, including all of our thoughts and deeds, provides not only redemption through Christ, but also forgiveness for all of our sins, as well as freedom from the power of sin. Therefore, a primary goal of our church is to help each person to grow in Christ in the midst of his or her unique history and struggles and discern how to walk righteously with Him and others along the way.

It is our prayer that by the grace of God, as we follow Christ as the authority over every aspect of our lives, that our love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment, so that we may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless until the day of Christ...to the glory and praise of God (Phil. 1:9-11).

Summary

1. We believe that term "marriage" has only one meaning, that marriage sanctioned by God joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as described in Scripture.
2. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual

activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. (Genesis 2:24-25, Matthew 19:4-6, Ephesians 5:22-33)

3. We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexual conduct, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or any attempt to change one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God.

4. We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

5. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Unkind or unloving behavior or attitudes, even towards those with whom we disagree, are to be rejected and are not in line with Scripture nor the doctrines of the Church.

Grace Church of Orange Policies and Practices

1. Based on our Biblical beliefs and our desire to adhere to Scripture and obey God, church staff, leadership, ministry partners, as well as any and all of the church's agents, shall not conduct or condone same sex unions or marriages, nor shall the church's property or resources be used for such purposes.

2. With regard to members of Grace Church and their personal positions on this issue, we encourage them to exercise discernment and caution when dealing with social and moral issues that affect believers, and consult the Word of God and trusted advisors as they make decisions.

3. We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the Church as the local body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to Church members and the community, it is imperative that all Pastors/Elders, Officers, persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, should abide by and agree to this Statement on Marriage and Human Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly.