

# **HOMOSEXUALITY**

## **A RED MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY CHURCH POSITION PAPER**

America has been collectively processing homosexuality in a very public way over the past three decades. There are diverse opinions being expressed on this subject in the political arena and in the religious arena. The tone of this conversation is varied as well, ranging from open hostility and violence to camaraderie and solidarity.

As we watch and participate in this conversation at Red Mountain Community Church we have four important commitments that we want to honor. They are commitments that we think are inherent in calling oneself a follower of Christ.

- We are committed to conveying to all the story of God paying for our sins through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus. Conveying this story by word and deed is a trust that demands from us an open-heartedness to all people.
- We are committed to support any and all in their personal journey toward a fuller expression of the character of Christ. This demands understanding and tolerance of our imperfections, and patience as patterns of thought are wrestled with. We must foster the progress of all who wish to live as Christ desires them to live.
- We are committed to represent accurately what God has revealed in terms of his thought for humanity. Christ represented God to the very end, and it cost Him His life. We must follow Him in this.
- We are committed to a certain tone and rhetoric in all conversations. Our commitment is to speak our convictions with precision, but humbly, with loving, empathetic, and respectful words.

## **BIBLE INTERPRETATION**

We believe that God has provided for us a written record of His heart and mind with regard to our experience of human life and existence. While this record does not give us an exhaustive revelation of all we might like to know about God, it is a sufficient unveiling of His thought so that we can know with certainty His mind on many matters. We realize that interpreting this record, the Bible, is a challenge, but not in the sense that its meaning is lost or hidden. Interpretation is challenging only because our knowledge of the culture and usage of words within those cultures is limited. And so those of us that have chosen to live by the principles of the Bible know well and first hand the challenges of Bible interpretation. There are sections of it that are very challenging.

## **THE BIBLE'S TEACHING**

Having acknowledged the complexity of Bible interpretation, we must say that the passages of Scripture dealing with homosexuality are not among those difficult to interpret. In the entire record of the Bible that deals specifically with this subject, there is no contradiction. Though different human authors separated by centuries of time recorded the words, the accounts of the mind of God on this matter speak as from one voice. The testimony of the Bible is this; homosexuality is not God's will for humanity (Leviticus 18:22; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. 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 6:9-11*

To those involved in the gay lifestyle, those words sting. We must empathize with that feeling. All who are Christ followers know that feeling well. It stings when we read about things like deceit, anger, slander and so many other things we naturally fall into. But there is no doubt about what the message of the Bible on homosexuality is. Homosexuality is outside of the will of God for us.

Many in Christian circles have sought to refute the acceptance of the actual words of the Bible on this subject. Only lowering one's view of the Bible and dismissing its words as the testimony of a certain culture from a certain era in history can lead one to do this. To us however, if the Bible were that unreliable, logic would lead us to abandon our entire faith. If the record of the Bible is not reliable, then nothing in it can be trusted, and we would be foolish to base our thinking on any portion of it. In that case, what we have in it is a quaint, cultural tale, not the revelation of the mind of God. We believe that all evidence points to the Bible's reliability.

## **THE GOSPEL AND HOMOSEXUALITY**

What the Bible says about the practice of homosexuality is relatively easy to establish. How that message should be conveyed must be pondered carefully and prayerfully. We must remember that **the grace and love of God must be communicated and demonstrated to all people**. We all espouse that, but somehow when it comes to homosexuality, we have not practiced it. Some see no conflict in Christians carrying signs that say things like "God hates fags." We must grieve at such things. We must not frontload the gospel with the demand that gays and lesbians lay aside their lifestyle before God can accept them. We would not be as quick to demand that of a liar, or of an arrogant person. Somehow we have come to view the gay lesbian community as having extra dues to pay. We must not project that the blood of Christ covers them only if it is combined with a promise never to practice homosexuality again! Our approach should be to extend the gospel to them as we would anyone else, with the deepest sincerity and love, as something freely offered by God. Once their spirits are united with God, effectual change in this matter is made possible, as with all other behaviors that are outside of God's will. God will be faithful to bring inner conviction regarding truth.

Can one be a Christian and practice homosexuality? Yes. Can one be an obedient Christian and be practicing the gay lesbian lifestyle? No. Gays and lesbians who believe in Jesus are like all Christians in that we all share a common challenge. We must choose obedience on a moment-by-moment basis, conforming to the pattern of life modeled by Jesus Christ. Diligence and faithfulness are required of all of us in myriads of real life issues that God desires to change in us. At risk is our progress in the Christian faith, our personal freedom, our eternal reward, and our experience of God's power and blessing. This holds true whether one's natural behavior leads them into fits of rage, into bouts of anxiety, into substance abuse, into adultery, or into homosexuality. We each have battles that relate to who we are and how life has shaped us. We must fight the battles and make the choices each moment of the rest of our lives on this earth.

## “BUT I CAN’T FIGHT WHO I AM!”

On the subject of one’s sexuality the statement is often made that it is naturally determined and we must be true to who we are. We believe that this is a flawed argument not because we understand all the genetics of the matter. It is flawed because who we are naturally is not where God wants to leave us. In a host of areas God’s heart is to take us away from natural, instinctive living and to lead us into supernatural living that is choreographed within us by the Holy Spirit. The point of Christianity is that many things have gone wrong in all of creation and our loving and gracious God is in the process of patiently bringing it back. Sexuality is just one area in which we are called to something other than what comes naturally (Galatians 5:15-26; Ephesians 4:17-32).

## WHAT WE MUST DO

The journey to where God wants us in so many matters is just that, a journey. It is a process we must get good at supporting in all people, no matter what their particular patterns of behavior have been. By getting good at supporting the spiritual journey of others we mean making a personal investment in them. We mean coming along side of them, **speaking the truth in love, extending grace, building supporting relationships** with them, standing with them through failure and re-starts. This is part of the debt that the Bible says we owe to each other. We must face the fact that we have wrongly arrived at the point where we extend great grace and patience in helping people through certain sins. Other sins, homosexuality being one of them, we tend to govern by different rules—one strike and you’re out! We must squarely face this bias that is in us.

What then will our posture be in the conversation regarding homosexuality? First, we simply do not have the freedom to change what God has revealed to be His will for us. To do so is to take His place, and make ourselves out to be God. That means that we must when asked, speak humbly, lovingly, and precisely for God. His will is that we leave behind the gay lesbian lifestyle. We will likely be misunderstood when we state this truth plainly. We must do all we can to mitigate that, which leads to a second observation. While the truth is not up for negotiation, our tone must be. We must be confident that we will not change or endanger the truth one iota by changing our tone and our posture in this conversation. We must go overboard in projecting a tone of grace and love. In doing so we will find ourselves representing more of the heart of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We will increase the power of the truth by the tone of our words.