

## Grace Chapel's Statement on Marriage, Singleness, and Sexuality

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### 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 a man is a woman and vice versa. By God's design and providence, the man and the woman join together in marriage and become one flesh.

In the New Testament, the oneness of male and female in marriage symbolizes the relationship between Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:22–33). This symbolism of marriage expands into greater significance with the husband-and-wife relationship illustrating the relationship between Christ and the Church. A husband is urged to lay down his life in sacrificial love and protection of his wife. A wife is called to willingly submit to the leadership of her loving husband in a safe and cherished relationship.

Everywhere in Scripture, the sexual relationship between man and woman, exclusively within the bond of marriage, is viewed as natural and beautiful. No other sexual relationships are endorsed by the Scriptures or acceptable in God's sight, including same-sex relationships (Romans 1:18–32) and sexual relationships outside of marriage (Colossians 3:5).

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

Regardless of whether a person's sexual identity is believed to be 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 call any sexual relationship outside of a husband-and-wife monogamous marriage, sin. Similarly, we urge and pray that all individuals – both heterosexual and homosexual – would refrain from sexual intimacy outside of marriage – adultery or fornication – and believe those sexual urgings to be temptations toward sinful behavior (Hebrews 13:4). It is Grace Chapel's desire that all individuals – both homosexual and heterosexual – refrain from unbiblical sexual intimacy in any form, resist temptation, and abstain from sinful behavior for the glory of God.

### Welcoming Singles at Grace Chapel

Many people remain single for a time and some for their entire life. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 7 that being single can be the most effective way to live a productive and focused life. We recognize there are several believers in our Grace Chapel family who are single and not in a committed relationship at this time. Our Grace Chapel family understands it can be incredibly challenging and even intimidating to feel accepted based on relationship status. With that in mind, our leadership, at Grace Chapel, enthusiastically welcomes any believer who is single. We would like to offer the same opportunities and freedoms to serve through Grace Chapel within any other guidelines already established for our body of believers. We do not discriminate based on someone's relationship status of being single or in a committed relationship as we apply Scripture to our lives or the management of the church community.

### Serving in Ministry

We expect that all members and attenders of Grace Chapel who wish to serve our Savior Jesus Christ and fellow believers will be vigilant in their behavior, including all aspects of sexual behavior (e.g., lewdness, pornography, immorality, etc.), will regularly confess their sins to God for forgiveness, repent, 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 relationship or a heterosexual single person engaging in an ongoing immoral sexual relationship to serve in any position or ministry, we hold the homosexual person to the same standards. No members and friends of Grace Chapel should be participating in any such acts of sexual immorality, and

any such sin needs to be confessed, repented of, and put behind them (Colossians 3:1–14). 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, demonstrating the fruits of Spirit-led transformation.

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 embody and encourage biblical principles in every aspect of our corporate life.

## **Baptism**

We believe that baptism is open to all believers regardless of sexual attraction. The purpose of baptism is to identify the person who is baptized with Christ, to demonstrate publicly 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 heterosexual or homosexual – who is living any unrepentant 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. Any person – whether heterosexual and 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 prohibit services such as homosexual marriages or even marriages between heterosexual individuals who are “unequally yoked” in Christ (i.e., one person a Christ-follower and the other not a Christ-follower). Grace Chapel does not allow its facilities to be used for any marriage other than between one man and one woman who we believe to be “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.

Approved by the Grace Chapel Elders July 21, 2021