

FirstLight
A Ministry of Hope and Healing

Affirmations on Homosexuality

- 1) We recognize that as a consequence of the fall from innocence, all men and women now relate in distorted ways to God, self, others and nature. While we believe that both homosexual desire and behavior are an expression of that distortion, we also believe that heterosexual sin grieves God and is as offensive to his holiness as is homosexual sin. We believe, therefore, that since all people after the Fall are sexually broken, there is no room in the church of Jesus Christ for that self-righteousness and spiritual pride that has all too often led to contempt and hatred for homosexually-inclined people and to open cruelty and outright violence against them. We agree with the Christian pastor who was insisting that we look behind the sin to the human person when he wrote,

At the heart of the homosexual condition is a deep loneliness, the natural human hunger for mutual love, a search for identity, and a longing for completeness. (John Stott)

We believe it is time for the church to reach out in the name of Jesus Christ to the gay community with love, respect, a listening ear, and even with a willingness to take risks, in order that Christ's message of hope and reconciliation might commend itself. At the same time, believing that the Judeo-Christian Scriptures clearly affirm that all homosexual fantasy and behavior are contrary to the good law of God, we teach that these fantasies and acts need to be confessed, renounced and forsaken by those who would be followers of Jesus Christ. This implies that 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.

- 2) We believe that homosexuality is not what God wills for human beings made in his image. We believe that God has always called men and women out of a homosexual lifestyle and into the new life of his kingdom through repentance and faith in his Son, Jesus Christ, and that he gives to all who seek it a growing freedom from the compulsion of sinful sexual behavior. We believe that God's love has the power to recreate and restore the person who comes humbly and puts his confidence in Christ. This needed restoration comes through union with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection and in the sanctifying work of the indwelling Holy Spirit. But we also believe that many homosexually-inclined people have been sinned against, even from their childhood and that God hears their cries of pain and anger because he is a God of justice. At the same time, we believe that as fallen creatures, we all have a tendency to respond sinfully when we are sinned against. We believe that any refusal to receive divine grace and enablement for morally responsible attitudes and behavior in the face of being misused by others makes homosexually-inclined people (as it makes the heterosexually-inclined) accountable to God for the choices they make along the way from childhood to adulthood. We believe that this moral accountability is part of our significance as human beings and is real, even if careful science someday demonstrates a genetic predisposition toward homoerotic desire.*

* Our openness to the possibility of a "genetic component" (as one influencing factor among several) in the formation of homosexual desire flows out of the Christian view that man is a psychosomatic being, a mind-body unity. But this openness is very different from the currently popular, often dogmatic and—we think—simplistic claims about a "gay gene" or a "genetic cause" behind homosexuality.

- 3) We believe that God works change in those who renounce their homosexual desire and actions and seek wholeness in Christ. Yet the testimony of many godly men and women is that this change rarely takes the form of an immediate transmuting of all homosexual desire into heterosexual desire. We believe that the church, in its preaching of the power of Christ to make all things new by virtue of his resurrection, needs to guard itself not only against claiming too little for this present life but also against claiming too much for it. We believe that complete victory over sexual temptation—homosexual as well as heterosexual—will only come in the end when Christ returns. According to the promise of the gospel, the full redemption of our bodies is something for which even spirit-filled believers must wait (Romans 8:23).

At the same time that we believe the battle against homosexual temptation will usually be ongoing, we also believe that because God is gracious and merciful, no one can limit the degree of freedom—not only from homoerotic acts but even from homoerotic desire—that Christ may choose to grant particular individuals who call on his name and seek his face for the healing of their souls.

But we believe that the most important change Christ works in homosexually-inclined people is the miracle of the New Birth wherein the Holy Spirit gives them a new heart to love God as their tender Father and to find their deepest personal fulfillment in him rather than in unlawful relationships. God works in the believer's heart a deepening desire to know and love the goodness of his law regarding sexual boundaries and a sincere willingness to live in faithfulness to it, even when that is difficult.

- 4) We believe that in times of fierce temptation, the desire to live out homosexual longings, just like the desire to live out illicit heterosexual longings, will need to be “put to death” (to use the Apostle Paul's metaphor) by the grace of God's Spirit at work within us; that is, with prayer, faith, tears, the accountability and encouragement of other Christians—in fact, with every means of grace given to us by the Lord. And it is proper for Christians to commend each other when there is heroic self-discipline and resistance to temptation, especially when the thing forbidden by God is not only personally attractive but also socially approved. Nevertheless, we affirm that believers must not begin to think of themselves as doing anything extraordinary when, energized by the Spirit of God, they practice that self-control that every disciple of Jesus Christ is called to in the battle against unholy desire, even as Jesus himself instructed us,

“So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”

And yet, those who for Christ's sake, resist sexual temptation and practice charity in their singleness or monogamy in their marriage, have the right to trust that, because of the atoning work of Christ, their faithfulness, however hard-won and however imperfect, will one day be rewarded in the Lord's great affirming words,

“Well done, good and faithful servant!” (Matthew 25:21)

- 5) We believe that the church is the primary instrument God has chosen to use in ministering the reconciliation and wholeness Christ won at the cross. At the same time, believing that the Lord takes up all kinds of instruments into his hand for the perfecting of his people, we are thankful for and seek to honor genuine help for people struggling with sexual addictions from whatever quarter it comes.

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