

VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH



Biblical Sexual Morality

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The Distinctives series articulates key biblical and theological convictions of Village Bible Church.

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Acknowledgements:

This document is based on:

- **The Colorado Statement on Biblical Sexual Morality**, which was developed in 2000 by a team of nine diverse and distinguished Bible scholars that were pulled together by Focus on the Family. All on the team are deeply concerned about God's call for a sexually pure Church, and all of whom are well qualified to address biblical doctrine on the issue.
- **Transgenderism - Our Position**, by Focus on the Family
- **What About Intersexuality?** by Caleb Price, Focus on the Family
- **Authentic Sexuality**, by Daniel Weiss, 03/01/2013, www.brushfiresfoundation.org/sexuality

We also fully affirm **The Nashville Statement: A Coalition for Biblical Sexuality**, which was released August 29, 2017, after we developed this document. www.cbmw.org/nashville-statement

Table of Contents

1.	Desire and experience cannot be trusted as guidelines to the morality of sex	4
2.	God's standard is moral purity in every thought about sex, as well as in every act of sex.	4
3.	God's standards for sexual moral purity are meant to protect human happiness	5
4.	God calls some to a life of marriage, others to lifelong celibacy, but His calling to either state is a divine gift worthy of honor and respect.....	5
5.	Sexual behavior is moral only within the institution of heterosexual, monogamous marriage.....	6
6.	Marriage protects the transcendent significance of personal sexual intimacy.	6
7.	Sex in marriage should be an act of love and grace that transcends the petty sins of human selfishness, and should be set aside only when both partners agree to do so, and then only for a limited time of concentrated prayer.....	6
8.	Sex outside of marriage is never moral.....	7
9.	The Old and New Testaments uniformly condemn sexual contact between persons of the same sex	7
10.	We affirm God's design of the two sexes, male and female.....	7
11.	The moral corruption of sexual sin can be fully forgiven through repentance and faith in Christ's atoning work	8
12.	Christians must grieve with and help those who suffer hard-ship caused by sexual immorality, even when it is caused by their own acts of sin	8
13.	We call upon all fathers and mothers to take a proactive role in their children's development.....	8
14.	We are called to proclaim the truth and beauty of God's design	9
15.	We are each fearfully and wonderfully made	9
16.	Our response to the hurting.....	9

Since the dawn of time, people have struggled to understand and steward their sexuality. Sexual sin—or brokenness—affects everyone, even as it impacts every person uniquely. Indeed, sexual brokenness is so common that many people see it as normal. That is, people have come to believe that the difficult, confusing and painful way we often experience our sexuality is the way it was meant to be.

Sexual brokenness stems from the disintegration of the core components of our beings that comes through sin. Healing and wholeness occur when we reintegrate body, mind and spirit through a vibrant, compelling, biblical understanding of our creation. This integrated sexual ethic is what we mean by the phrase authentic sexuality.

Authentic sexuality operates in harmony with God's nature and His revealed intent for our lives. Despite the sexual brokenness we often feel, God has written this eternal identity into our nature as male and female—made in the image of the Triune God. The distinctions and complementarities of the sexes, the inseparable closeness of the one-flesh marital union, the self-gifting model of love and service demonstrated by Christ are signs pointing to our true calling as God's beloved sons and daughters. Our God-given identity is the starting point and continual guide for all aspects of our lives, including how we steward our sexuality.

We live in a sexually confused and painful world. Exploitation and heartache abound. People have become slaves to their desires. Much of what we see, read and hear every day is fabricated in order to manipulate our emotions, attitudes and wallets. The world is looking for authenticity and needs it nowhere as much as in the sexual realm.

God intends sex to be a source of satisfaction, honor, and delight to those who enjoy it within the parameters of the moral standards He has established. Biblically speaking, human sexuality is both a *gift* and a *responsibility*. At creation, the gift of sex was among those things God declared to be "very good" (Gen. 1:31). What's more, the sexual relationship is invested with a profound significance in that it brings together a man and a woman within the context of the shared image of God (Gen. 1:27). Because sex is God's idea, and because it touches the image of God in human life, it is very important that the holiness of sexual behavior be diligently preserved. In fact, sexual behavior is moral only when it is holy (Eph. 1:4; 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:3-7; 1 Pet. 1:14-16).

Not only is sex good in itself; it is also given to serve good purposes. At creation God made it very clear that sex functions in two ways: it generates "fruit" (Gen. 1:28); and it enables relational "union" (Gen. 2:24). In other words, sexuality does not exist merely for its own sake. Rather, sex fosters human nurturing, both through the union of husband and wife and also through the enrichment of society through the building of families and communities. God also made sex to reflect the mysterious spiritual relationship He will one day enjoy with all redeemed humanity following the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7, 9).

According to God's plan, sexual intimacy is the exclusive prerogative of husband and wife within the context of marriage. Sexual morality, on the other hand, is everyone's concern. It matters to single individuals, to families, and to society. Most of all, it matters to God.

Sex that honors God's guidelines and standards is pleasurable. He designed sexual activity to be physically enjoyable, emotionally satisfying, psychologically fulfilling, and spiritually meaningful because He delights in the joys and pleasures of His creatures (Song of Sol. 4:1-16). Men and women who honor God's standards for sexual behavior please Him as well as themselves (1 Cor. 6:20; also note analogy in Isa. 62:5).

But while sex is designed to be pleasing, not all sexual pleasure is ethical. Feelings are extremely unreliable as guides to the morality of sex. As a matter of fact, it is possible for sinful men and women to experience a form of physical enjoyment and degrees of emotional, psychological, and spiritual fulfillment even in sexual conduct that God considers abhorrent. For this reason, the Bible gives many solemn warnings against appealing to human passion or lust as the basis for our definition of moral sex (Rom. 1:24, 26; 13:13-14; 1 Thess. 4:5; 2 Tim. 2:22; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 John 2:15-17; Jude 18). Our sex lives are moral only when conducted according to God's standards. When engaged in according to these guidelines, sexual activity is enriching, fulfilling, and eminently blessed.

We want to warn against deceptions that hinder or forestall this blessing of God upon our enjoyment of the wonderful gift of sex. We also want to help men and women understand God's good plan for sexual conduct, and thereby to realize all the joy, satisfaction and honor God offers to sexual creatures made in His image.

Based on our understanding of biblical teaching, we make the following declarations. We do not claim that these declarations cover everything the Bible says on sexual morality. But we do believe they highlight standards that are critical for our time.

- 1. Desire and experience cannot be trusted as guidelines to the morality of sex**
(Rom. 8:5-8; 13:14; 1 Cor. 2:14; 1 Thess. 4:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:22; James 1:14; 1 John 2:15-16; Jude 19). Instead, the morality of sex is defined by God's holiness as declared in the Bible (Lev. 20:7-21, 26; 1 Cor. 6:18-19; Eph. 1:4; 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:3-7; Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 1:15-16).

Thus, we affirm that men and women are free to enjoy sex in any way that honors God's holiness. We affirm that God made sex to be physically enjoyable, emotionally satisfying, psychologically fulfilling and spiritually meaningful, and that only sex that honors God's holiness can fully realize the complexity of His design at every level. We affirm that concepts of sexual morality founded upon anything other than God's holiness always pervert God's standards of sexual moral purity.

- 2. God's standard is moral purity in every thought about sex, as well as in every act of sex.**

Sexual purity can be violated even in thoughts that never proceed to outward acts (Job 31:1; Matt. 5:28; Phil. 4:8; James 1:14-15). Sex must never be used to oppress, wrong or take advantage of anyone (1 Thess. 4:6). Rape, incest, sexual abuse, pedophilia, voyeurism, prostitution and pornography always exploit and corrupt and must be condemned (Lev. 18:7-10; 19:29; 2 Sam.

13:1-22; Prov. 6:26; 23:27; Matt. 5:28; 1 Thess. 4:3-7; 1 Pet. 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:13-14).

Thus, we affirm that God requires sexual moral purity in thought as well as in deed. We affirm that sexual desire must be disciplined to be moral. We affirm that thoughts of indulging sexual desire by outward acts of sexual sin are inward sins of lust. We deny that stimulating lust by images of sexual sin can be moral at any age or under any circumstances. We believe that no sexual act can be moral if driven by desires that run contrary to the best interests of another human being. We believe no sexual act can be moral that treats persons as impersonal objects of sexual lust. We reject the idea that thoughts about engaging in sexual sin are not immoral if not expressed in outward acts. We reject the idea that pedophilia, voyeurism, prostitution or pornography can ever be justified.

3. God's standards for sexual moral purity are meant to protect human happiness

(Prov. 5:18-19; 6:32-33; John 15:10-11), but sex is not an entitlement, nor is it needed for personal wholeness or emotional maturity.

Thus, we affirm that unmarried singles who abstain from sex can be whole, mature persons, as pleasing to God as persons who are faithful in marriage. We affirm that sexual celibacy is a worthy state for mature men and women (Matt. 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:1, 8; Rev. 14:4), and that lifelong celibacy can be a gift from God (1 Cor. 7:7). We affirm that freedom for service without obligations to spouse and children is a worthy advantage of the unmarried life (1 Cor. 7:32-35). We reject the idea that persons are not “whole” without sexual intercourse. We affirm that all persons, even unmarried teenagers, can rely on God for strength to resist sexual temptation (1 Cor. 10:13). We deny that unmarried teenagers must have sex and cannot abstain from sex before marriage.

4. God calls some to a life of marriage, others to lifelong celibacy, but His calling to either state is a divine gift worthy of honor and respect

(1 Cor. 7:36-38). No one is morally compromised by following God’s call to either state, and no one can justify opposing a divine call to either state by denying the moral goodness of that state.

Thus, we affirm that God is pleased with those He calls to serve Him through the loving expression of sexual intimacy in marriage. We also affirm God is pleased with those He calls to special witness and service through a life of celibacy apart from marriage. We reject the idea that God’s Word ever represents the loving expression of sexual intimacy in marriage as morally compromised.

5. Sexual behavior is moral only within the institution of heterosexual, monogamous marriage.

Marriage is secure only when established by an unconditional, covenantal commitment to lifelong fidelity (Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:14-15; Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-8; 1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2; Eph. 5:31), and we should not separate what God has joined (Mal 2:14-15; Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:9). Christians continue to debate whether there are a limited number of situations in which divorce is justifiable (Deut. 24:1-4; Matt. 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:15), but all agree that divorce is never God's ideal; lifelong commitment should always be the Christian's goal.

Thus, we affirm that God established the moral definition of marriage, and that it should not be changed according to the dictates of culture, tradition, or personal preference. We deny that the morality of marriage is a matter of mere custom, or that it should be allowed to shift with the tide of cultural opinion or social practice. Furthermore, we affirm that God views marriage as an unconditional, covenantal relationship that joins a man and woman as sexual partners for life. We oppose the reduction of the moral obligations of marriage to a business contract. We do not believe that divorce for reasons of dissatisfaction, difficulty, or disappointment is morally justified.

6. Marriage protects the transcendent significance of personal sexual intimacy.

Heterosexual union in marriage expresses the same sort of holy, exclusive, permanent, complex, selfless and complementary intimacy that will someday characterize the union of Christ with the redeemed and glorified Church (Eph. 5:28-33; 1 Cor. 6:12-20).

Thus, we affirm that intimate sexual union in marriage is a reflection of the intimate moral and spiritual union Christ will someday enjoy with the redeemed and glorified Church. We do not agree that the meaning and purpose of human sexuality can be defined on the basis of personal preference or opinion. We oppose the idea that sexual morality is simply a matter of culture, tradition, or individual aspiration.

7. Sex in marriage should be an act of love and grace that transcends the petty sins of human selfishness, and should be set aside only when both partners agree to do so, and then only for a limited time of concentrated prayer

(1 Cor. 7:3-5). *Thus, we affirm* that sex in marriage should be enjoyed without selfishness. We do not believe that sex should be withheld as a way of controlling, punishing, or manipulating the behavior of a spouse. We reject the morality of any sexual act, even in marriage, that does not express love seasoned by grace. We believe no sexual act can be moral if it is driven by selfishness or ambition for power.

8. Sex outside of marriage is never moral

(Exod. 20:14; Lev. 18:7-17, 20; Deut. 5:18; Matt. 19:9,18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Rom. 13:9; -1 Cor. 6:13,18; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:3; Heb. 13:4). This includes all forms of intimate sexual stimulation (such as foreplay and oral sex) that stir up sexual passion between unmarried partners (Matt. 5:27-28; 2 Tim. 2:22). Such behavior offends God (Rom. 1:24; 1 Thess. 4:8) and often causes physical and emotional pain and loss in this life (Prov. 5:3-14). Refusal to repent of sexual sin may indicate that a person has never entered into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:32; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Eph. 5:3-5; Jude 13; Rev. 22:15).

Thus, we affirm that God's blessing rests on sexual intimacy only when it occurs within the boundaries of marriage. We deny that sex outside of marriage is justified for any reason. We reject the idea that sexual intimacy outside of marriage can be moral if partners are honest, consenting, or sufficiently committed. We oppose the portrayal of sexual sin as a way of enhancing the popular appeal of entertainment. We reject the idea that sex between unmarried teenagers is acceptable if it is "safe." And we will not welcome into membership any person who claims to be a Christian yet willfully refuses to turn away from the sin of living in a sexual relationship outside of marriage (or any sin for that matter) (1 Cor. 5:1-13).

9. The Old and New Testaments uniformly condemn sexual contact between persons of the same sex

(Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:10, Jude 1:7); and God has decreed that no one can ever excuse homosexual behavior by blaming his or her Creator (Gen. 2:24; Rom. 1:24-25).

Thus, we affirm that moral sex is always heterosexual in nature. We affirm that God gives strength to His people when they ask Him for help in resisting immoral sexual desires, including desires for homosexual sex. We affirm that God has perfect knowledge concerning human sexual biology and made no mistake in prohibiting homosexuality without qualification or exception. We deny the claim that science can justify the morality of homosexual behavior. We reject the idea that homosexual attraction is a gift from God (James 1:13). We deny the idea that homosexual relationships are as valid as heterosexual relationships.

10. We affirm God's design of the two sexes, male and female

(Gen 1:26-29 & 2:23-24; Matt 19:3-6; Mark 10:6-9; Eph 5:28-32).

The Bible defends the inherent honor, dignity, value and equality of the two sexes as created in God's image — intentionally male and female —each bringing unique and complementary qualities to sexuality and relationships.

Each of the two sexes is a glorious gift from God – meant to be offered back to Him either in complementary unity with the other in the context of marriage for procreation and mutual delight or in celibacy for undivided devotion to Christ.

Not only do male and female together reflect the image of God, but their coming together in a marriage relationship to bring forth new life is used in Scripture as the deepest and most intimate analogy of God's relationship with His people. Throughout both Testaments, God and His people are portrayed as husband and wife or as a groom and bride. The creation account found in Genesis lays out this gender-based, matrimonial picture and sets the stage for the final, eternal union of God and His people — of Christ and His bride — described in the book of Revelation.

11. The moral corruption of sexual sin can be fully forgiven through repentance and faith in Christ's atoning work

(1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 John 1:9), but physical and psychological scars caused by sexual sin cannot always be erased in this life.

Thus, we affirm that God fully forgives all who repent of sexual sin. We believe that relationships broken by sexual sin can be restored through genuine repentance and faith. We deny that there is any sort of sexual sin God cannot forgive. We oppose the idea that victims of sexual infidelity or abuse should never forgive those who have sinned against them.

12. Christians must grieve with and help those who suffer hard-ship caused by sexual immorality, even when it is caused by their own acts of sin

(Rom. 12:15; Luke 19:10). But we must give aid in ways that do not deny moral responsibility for sexual behavior (John 8:11).

Thus, we affirm that God calls Christians to love all who suffer social isolation, poverty, illness, or the burdens of unplanned pregnancy and single parenting, whether or not it was caused by their own sexual sin. We believe Christ set an example of loving ministry to those who suffer from the results of their own acts of sin. We reject the idea that our obligation to alleviate human suffering is valid only if such help is “deserved.”

13. We call upon all fathers and mothers to take a proactive role in their children's development

by providing them with strong, Christian example of what it means to be male and female and live in accordance to the biblical standards of sexuality and gender. Children must be taught that, just as each individual life has inestimable worth, so too each gender brings its own unique characteristics of inestimable worth to relationships, family and society.

14. We are called to proclaim the truth and beauty of God's design

and the redemption of sexual brokenness in our lives and culture through Jesus Christ. Like everyone else, sexually broken individuals are desperately in need of God's truth and deserve to know the love and compassion of Christ as shown through His people.

15. We are each fearfully and wonderfully made

(Psalm 139, Zephaniah 3:17; John 3:16, 1 Cor. 7, 2 Cor. 12:9). A tiny fraction of the population faces life with an intersex condition in which their anatomy and/or reproductive organs don't correspond to typical definitions of male or female.

Regardless of what disorder or ailment any of us might have, we are each "fearfully and wonderfully made" and have unending value in the sight of God. God readily seeks to strengthen and encourage those who find themselves unable to marry and participate in genderedness and sexual expression as ordained in the created order. As the Hands and Feet of Christ, we are called to help intersexuals carry this "heavy yoke" and steward their assigned gender in a manner that glorifies God and, to the degree possible, reflects His created intent for human sexuality and gender.

16. Our response to the hurting

While God's intent for sexuality and gender is being turned upside down, we must remember that those who struggle with their gender identity have lived lives of great pain, confusion and rejection. And, just as Jesus went out of his way to reach all people, we're called to humbly share His love embodied in the Gospel, to lift them up in prayer and to allow the Holy Spirit to bring about conviction, healing and transformation.

Never have the sexual ethics of our culture been more confused and contorted. Divorce is rampant; co-habitation before or instead of marriage has become normal; new technologies have made pornography immediately accessible; and the once inconceivable notion of same-sex "marriage" is now recognized by law. The need for a clear voice from the church on these matters is critical, both for the health of our own community and for our faithful witness to the world. The above statements, drawn from Scripture as our ultimate authority, sets forth a Christian vision of human sexuality as a good gift of God. The divine design for sexual expression within the commitment of marriage between a man and a woman is fundamental to the well-ordering of human society and is integral to human flourishing.