

# The Journey Church

## Positional Statement: Homosexuality

The homosexual debate in our country and churches across the country is the catalyst for why we believe as a church we need a definitive statement as to what we believe, why we believe it, and how we as a church will handle this issue in our congregation.

### **Our Theological Stance:**

In beginning the discussion on homosexuality, we actually have to back up further and look more closely at sex. Sex in the bible is intended to be in the marriage context and marriage in the bible is always between one man and one woman. Jesus confirms this union and covenant of marriage<sup>1</sup> as being between one man and one woman in Matthew 19:4-6 when he recounts the Genesis 2:24 account of God making male and female and joining them together in a covenant relationship in which intimacy would be shared within that covenant. This leads to our belief: all sex outside of the marriage covenant is sin. That includes fornication (sex before marriage), adultery (sex outside of marriage), and homosexuality (sex with the same sex). We also believe that pornography is a sin<sup>2</sup> and in Matthew 5 Jesus says that if you lust in your heart you have committed adultery. All sex, outside of heterosexual marriage, is sin.

The Scriptures address all of these sexual sins mentioned above, including homosexuality. The Scriptures say: "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable."<sup>3</sup> Also, Paul describes how the wrath of God is being revealed against the wickedness of men who suppress the truth and they exchange it for a lie. God gives them over to their sinful desires and sexual impurity and they degraded their bodies with another by exchanging natural relations (between man and woman, husband and wife) for unnatural ones (men with men, women with women). God says that this is wicked, evil, and indicative of our depravity.<sup>4</sup>

All sin, including sexual sins, will condemn us before God and sentence us to an eternity in hell. Our only hope of redemption and restoration is found in Jesus. All sexual sin, including same-gender sex, is forgivable through the grace of Jesus when confessed, repented from, and surrendered to God. The question is not: "Can I have sex with whoever I want,

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<sup>1</sup> The bible speaks of marriage as covenant. See: Proverbs 2 & Malachi 2

<sup>2</sup> (Job 31:31)

<sup>3</sup> Leviticus 18:22

<sup>4</sup> Romans 1:18-32

whenever I want?" The answer to that question is no. The real question is: "Have you repented and turned to Jesus, received a new heart, with new desires, new passions, and by God's grace, moved forward to live a new life?"

At the Journey, we will never say that homosexuality is acceptable, nor will we say that other sexual sins are. We certainly will not be bated into elevating homosexuality as a worse sin than others, but instead seek to help all people find the grace, forgiveness, and hope found in Jesus. At the Journey, the person who struggles with homosexual desires who sits down beside the heterosexual couple having sex before marriage is not any more or less righteous, but we all need to make sure we are above reproach, walking in holiness so that as a community of faith we can say as is said in Ephesians 5:3 that there is not even a hint of sexual immorality among us.

#### **6 Statements on our Beliefs about Homosexual Behavior and Ministering to Homosexual Persons:**

Our affirmation that the Bible is the infallible Word of God with supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct, and our affirmation that a Christian should live for the glory of God include the following six beliefs about heterosexuality and homosexuality:

1. We believe that heterosexuality is God's revealed will for humankind and that, since God is loving, a chaste and faithful expression of this orientation (whether in singleness or in marriage) is the ideal to which God calls all people.
2. We believe that a homosexual orientation is a result of the fall of humanity into a sinful condition that pervades every person. Whatever biological or familial roots of homosexuality may be discovered, we do not believe that these would sanction or excuse homosexual behavior, though they would deepen our compassion and patience for those who are struggling to be free from sexual temptations.
3. We believe there is hope for the person with a homosexual orientation and that Jesus Christ offers a healing alternative in which the power of sin is broken and the person is freed to know and experience his or her true identity in Christ and in the fellowship of his Church.
4. We believe that this freedom is attained through a process which includes recognizing homosexual behavior as sin, renouncing the practice of homosexual behavior, rediscovering healthy, non-erotic friendships with people of the same sex, embracing a

moral sexual lifestyle, and in the age to come, rising from the dead with a new body free from every sinful impulse. This process parallels the similar process of sanctification needed in dealing with heterosexual temptations as well. We believe that this freedom comes through faith in Jesus Christ, by the power of his Spirit.

5. We believe that all persons have been created in the image of God and should be accorded human dignity. We believe therefore that hateful, fearful, unconcerned harassment of persons with a homosexual orientation should be repudiated. We believe that respect for persons with a homosexual orientation involves honest, reasoned, nonviolent sharing of facts concerning the immorality and liability of homosexual behavior. On the other hand, endorsing behavior which the Bible disapproves endangers persons and dishonors God.
  
6. We believe that Christian churches should reach out in love and truth to minister to people touched by homosexuality, and that those who contend Biblically against their own sexual temptation should be patiently assisted in their battle, not ostracized or disdained. However, the more prominent a leadership role or modeling role a person holds in a church or institution of the Convention, the higher will be the expectations for God's ideal of sexual obedience and wholeness. We affirm that both heterosexual and homosexual persons should find help in the church to engage in the Biblical battle against all improper sexual thoughts and behaviors.

### **Attendance and Participation in the Life of the Community**

In light of The Journey's theological position on homosexuality, we make the following recommendations regarding participation of those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (GLBT):

GLBT persons are welcome to attend any gathering of The Journey—corporate worship, small groups, special church-wide events as well as adult men's and women's ministry meetings (based on gender at birth, men are welcome to attend men's meetings, women are welcome to attend women's meetings).

Certain qualifications, however, are placed on GLBT persons who desire to serve in ministry and/or leadership roles within The Journey. These qualifications are not limited to GLBT persons, but are the same qualifications as those for any person seeking to serve in a

ministry and/or leadership that is currently involved in or has been involved in a lifestyle (publicly or privately) that falls within the biblical definition of sin.

GLBT persons who are self-aware that GLBT desires directly conflict with the teachings of the Bible, who have repented of past transgression and who are actively pursuing spiritual transformation and sanctification may serve in ministry or leadership.

GLBT persons who are not aware that GLBT desires conflict with the teachings of the Bible will be encouraged to meet with church leadership (or a designee of church leadership) for discussion, prayer and/or counseling. They will not be allowed to serve in ministry and/or leadership roles until they meet the conditions outlined in the previous paragraph.

GLBT persons who are actively engaged in a GLBT lifestyle, but recognize the need to repent will be encouraged to meet with church leadership (or a designee of church leadership) for discussion, prayer and/or counseling. They will not be allowed to serve in ministry and/or leadership roles until their lifestyle demonstrates repentance, spiritual transformation and sanctification based on the determination of church leadership.

GLBT persons who are actively engaged in a GLBT lifestyle and have no desire to change and/or refute the Bible's teaching regarding the GLBT lifestyle will not be allowed to serve in ministry and/or leadership roles within The Journey. GLBT persons who are militant in their GLBT lifestyle and beliefs (i.e. actively promoting the GLBT lifestyle and behaviors and/or encouraging other to participate) will be encouraged to find a place of worship more aligned with their personal choices and convictions.

Persons who adopt a GLBT lifestyle while serving in ministry and/or leadership roles within The Journey will be asked to stop serving, but are welcome to attend any gathering of The Journey - corporate worship, small groups, special church-wide events as well as adult men's and women's ministry meetings (based on gender at birth, men are welcome to attend men's meetings, women are welcome to attend women's meetings). They will be encouraged to meet with church leadership (or a designate of church leadership) for discussion, prayer and/or counseling. Their return to service in ministry and/or leadership will depend on their ability to meet the qualifications previously set forth in this document.

Persons struggling with same sex attraction or personal GLBT issues will be encouraged to talk with church leadership (i.e. Sr. Pastor, Campus Pastor, church staff member, small group leader or a member of the Elder Group) for discussion, prayer and/or counseling. A

plan of action should be prepared to help persons struggling with these issues find biblical answers to their questions and arrive at a decision based on their personal convictions and the teachings of the Bible. Persons engaging in this process must be advised throughout the process that the goal of The Journey will be to help them find biblical answers and make biblically based decisions regarding same sex attraction and/or personal GLBT issues. It should be clearly understood by all parties participating in the discussion, prayer and/or counseling that The Journey will provide biblical support and Christian spiritual advice. Those seeking a different type of support or advice will be advised to seek help from a more appropriate source that is aligned with their personal choices and convictions.

If it is suspected or discovered by church leadership that a person serving in a ministry and/or leadership role is actively engaged in a GLBT lifestyle or is demonstrating observable evidence of same sex attraction, a delegation from church leadership consisting of no fewer than two persons currently serving in church leadership and approved by the Sr. Pastor and the Elder Group will confront the person privately. The person will be advised of the discovery and given an opportunity to respond. If there has been a provable misunderstanding or error on the part of church leadership, a prompt apology must be made by the delegation and a formal apology issued to the person from all members of church leadership. The issue is to be dropped immediately and not considered against the person again. If the person confronted confesses to the suspicion or discovery and desires repentance and forgiveness, the person must immediately stop serving in ministry and/or leadership and submit to the process of restoration previously described. If the person confronted confesses to the suspicion or discovery but does not desire repentance and forgiveness, the person must immediately stop serving in ministry and/or leadership. Based on the situation and the best judgment of church leadership, the unrepentant person may be allowed to attend any church event or they may be asked to remove themselves from the fellowship of the church. Conduct or situations that breach any federal, state or local laws will be reported to the appropriate authorities immediately.