



Cornerstone University Position Paper on Marriage and Human Sexuality

Drafted by the Task Force on Marriage and Human Sexuality
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One of the realities of the North American higher education system is the diversity of its institutions, including diversity in their moral values. Most colleges and universities in the U.S. espouse and promote the dominant cultural value of individualism—namely, that individuals have the right and the responsibility to determine their own life path intellectually, spiritually, and morally. Some historic Christian universities, however, advance the belief that we flourish as individuals not by charting our own course in life but conforming to God's will as revealed in the Bible.

Such a distinctive approach to education has profound implications regarding one of the major cultural issues of our day: human sexuality. Cornerstone University stands with historic Christianity in affirming that the Bible contains clear teachings in the areas of sexuality and gender, as articulated in recent documents by mainstream evangelical organizations.¹ These teachings include:

1. Gender is not simply a cultural construct but a divine gift that is woven into creation and assigned at birth. The complementary nature of the human race as male and female, rooted in the relational nature of the Trinity, reflects the created order established by God when he created humans to carry out the cultural mandate.
2. Sexual intimacy reflects and celebrates this gendered ordering of creation. Concerning human sexuality, therefore, Scripture mandates sexual faithfulness as expressed in two life-enhancing options that are essential to human flourishing: sexual celibacy, or monogamous marriage between a man and a woman.
3. Marriage is a lifelong, sacred covenant instituted by God and intended to express the "one flesh" union of a man and a woman. The marriage union reflects the unity of our triune God and uniquely models the relationship between Christ and the church.

As summarized in our foundational doctrinal statement: "Adam and Eve's union as man and woman models God's design for marriage and perpetually stands as God's loving and righteous will for all sexual intimacy."

These beliefs have important implications for a Christian university in three areas:

1. Communal Implications

We live in a world in which all things are distorted by sin, including God's good gift of sexuality. We are all sinners, broken in some measure by the Fall and prone to wander from God's loving intention for sexuality. As author Andy Crouch has remarked, "Every one of us has fallen far short of honoring God and other human beings with our bodies."² For some, such temptations take the form of heterosexual desires outside the bounds of marriage, such as adultery, premarital sex, or pornography. For others, the effects of the Fall may manifest themselves in homosexual attraction or confusion about one's own gender identity. Regardless of the nature of the temptation, the sexual temptation itself is not sinful, but rather sexual or erotic behavior that is outside the bounds of heterosexual marriage.

For members of the community who struggle with their sexual identity or behavior, whether heterosexual or homosexual, we are committed to treating them with love and respect and nurturing them as brothers and sisters in Christ. At the same time, out of love for such individuals and a desire to see them flourish, we call them to behavior that follows the teachings of Scripture.

2. Institutional Implications

Given the salience of issues of marriage and sexuality in contemporary culture, it is essential that Cornerstone as an institution articulate and consistently apply clear expectations for our campus community. Thus, we will make institutional decisions in light of our biblical convictions concerning human sexuality and gender when it comes to behavioral expectations, housing, student admission and retention, employee hiring and retention, and other matters. Those policies may be found in the Employee Handbook and Student Handbook.

At the same time, as an academic institution, while we expect our faculty and staff to teach and defend an orthodox view of sexuality, we support the academic freedom of our faculty and staff to expose students to other perspectives on the subject, as well as to hold divergent opinions that are within the bounds of the Cornerstone Confession. Conversations regarding potentially controversial issues, conducted vigorously but civilly, are an important quality of an interdenominational Christian university.

3. Cultural Implications

Institutions that espouse a traditional biblical view of marriage and sexuality often find themselves out of step with a surrounding culture that emphasizes the right of the individual to define one's own beliefs and morality. Furthermore, we recognize that such a countercultural stance within the prevailing academic culture may precipitate not only verbal attacks but political discrimination in the future. Nevertheless, we are committed to being faithful to our historic Christian convictions on this and other matters. At times, God calls his people to stand against the dominant cultural values of their day. Such a prophetic stance has been practiced in the past by Christian institutions in their better moments, such as Christian colleges of the 19th century that admitted female students amid a predominantly patriarchal culture.

Our university mission, however, calls us not just to stand against culture but to influence our world for Christ and his kingdom. Because sexual faithfulness promotes the flourishing of both individuals and society, we will seek to model and promote healthy sexuality and to communicate a biblical understanding of sexuality and gender to our culture with wisdom and charity. And as a Christ-centered university, we will seek to nurture students to engage their culture as Christ-followers in every aspect of their lives, including their sexuality.

Additional Sources:

"A Safe and Hospitable Community," Cornerstone University White Paper, 2013.

Andy Crouch, "Sex Without Bodies," *Christianity Today*, July/August 2013.

Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.

Stanley Grenz, *Welcoming but not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.

Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*. New York: HarperOne, 1996.

Wesley Hill, *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.

Mark Yarhouse, *Homosexuality and the Christian: A Guide for Parents, Pastors, and Friends*. Bloomington: Bethany House Publishers, 2010.

¹See, for example, *Transsexuality: A Report by the Evangelical Alliance Policy Commission* (London: Evangelical Alliance Policy Commission/Paternoster; 2000), and "A Church Statement on Human Sexuality: Homosexuality and Same-Sex Marriage," by the Evangelical Free Church of America (2013). Relevant biblical texts on the subject are summarized in the Evangelical Free Church statement, pages 2-3.

² Andy Crouch, "Sex Without Bodies," *Christianity Today*, July/August 2013.