

Report of the Study Committee on Human Sexuality and Marriage

As a fellowship of churches committed to standing on the authority and life-giving truth of God's Word, we have a responsibility to confront the encroachment of sin and its curse in the life of the Church. As ambassadors of Christ, we are called to engage the sins of our broader culture with the life-restoring truth of the gospel. In that culture, advancing sexual sin seems a cause of first importance. Liberating sexual expression, sexual identity, and even sexual physiology and health from any authoritative restraint seems a primary tenant of our culture's mission of "progress." And it is increasingly expected that the Church will either join in the crusade or get out of the way. We feel that pressure in our churches as we tend to sexual brokenness and confronting sexual rebellion in our midst. As a result, the responsibility to clearly address "sexuality" with the truth of God's Word and the power of His Spirit is challenging, at times messy, and urgent.

The Study Committee on Biblical Principles for Living and the 130th BFC Conference saw the wisdom of reviewing our positions in regard to human sexuality and marriage. And so our study committee was formed and tasked with addressing the following:

- a. What is the biblical definition of family?
- b. What is the biblical position on civil unions and same sex marriages?
- c. Does the biblical teaching about the creation of human beings as male and female (Genesis 1:27) allow for sexual identity that is different than a person's sexual physiology?
- d. What does the Bible teach about seeking sexual self-gratification (examples: pornography, erotic literature or masturbation)?

The study committee reviewed the 1985 BFC report on homosexuality as well as the terminology in BPL 103-3 "Marriage and Singleness," BPL 103-4 "The Family," and Declaration on Particular Issues (DPI) Article 154 - "Homosexuality." We reviewed how other churches and denominations are handling these pressing issues. Studies were done on defining sexual holiness and the difference between sexual desire and sexual lust. Research was done on the biblical teaching concerning gender and who determines it, the definition of family, the moral evaluation of sexual self-gratification, the definition of marriage, the distinction between civil and sacred marriage, whether or not a "homosexual orientation" is inherently sinful, and whether or not the term "homosexual" is best understood as an identity or as a behavior, particularly for the believer.

It quickly became apparent to the committee that the issues connected to human sexuality within our culture are ever-changing, are purposely fluid, and often defy definition. Instead of tackling this massive topic by taking our cues and terminology from the culture and from a defensive position, we decided that it was most advantageous to put forth, in a positive way, what the Bible teaches regarding sexual holiness.

The reason we took this posture was three-fold. First, we hoped to put the beauty of holiness in a positive light and not as a restraint on freedom. Second, we wanted to avoid singling out one sexual sin as more egregious and enslaving than others. And third, we wanted a more comprehensive statement on sexual holiness which could be used in response to the various expressions of sexual sin.

With this in mind, the study committee constructed an article (BPL 103-3 "Sexual Holiness") that represents the biblical standard of sexual holiness, and an article that replaces the DPI Article 154 - "Homosexuality" (DPI Article 154 - "Sexual Immorality"). In so doing we did not change the BFC's position on homosexuality. Instead, we enhanced the BFC's position by treating homosexuality in light of the Bible's full teaching on sexual holiness and immorality.

PRESENTATION OF RESOLUTIONS

Whereas, the study committee is convinced that the Bible Fellowship Church, in order to adequately address present matters of sexuality and sexual expression, needs a clear and complete standard of God's design for sexual holiness, and

Whereas, our current Biblical Principles for Living (BPL) do not contain a statement on the biblical standard of sexual holiness be it

Resolved, that Article 103-3 "Sexual Holiness" be included in the Bible Fellowship Church Biblical Principles for Living, and the subsequent BPLs be renumbered accordingly.

Whereas, Article 154, "Homosexuality," isolates and elevates only one perversion of the biblical standard of sexual holiness be it

Resolved, that Article 154 "Homosexuality" be replaced with Article 154 "Sexual Immorality."

PROPOSED LEGISLATION

103-3 Sexual Holiness

103-3.1 A life of sexual holiness is a life lived by faith, believing that what God says about the purposes and parameters of sexual expression is both true and good. When a believer's thoughts and actions are not in conformity to the revealed will of God, they are to repent of their sin, submit to His lordship, and pursue delight in what God has ordained.

103-3.2 The purpose of sexual expression has been given to mankind by his Creator. The sexual union between a man and a woman was created, in part, to image the unity of the Godhead and God’s covenantal relationship with His people.² In addition, sexual union was given for the procreation of children and for the mutual enjoyment of husband and wife.³

God created the human race into two complementary sexes (“male and female”). This distinction is the first fact mentioned in connection with mankind being made in the image of God.⁴ The first marriage, and thus the first sexual act, was a recognition, expression, and celebration of this complementary distinction. God designed sexual union such that two complementary sexual halves, one man and one woman, come together and become a sexual whole. The Bible refers to this sexual union as becoming “one flesh.” This “one flesh” sexual union between the first man and his wife establishes the pattern and standard of sexual expression for all of humanity.⁵ The participation in, or promotion of, any sexual act other than this “one flesh” union, within the marriage covenant,⁶ or the willful neglect of this sexual union is a sinful disregard of its intended purpose and fails to glorify God in our bodies.⁷

Sexual expression is authorized within the bond of marriage between male and female. God’s name is glorified when the sexual union between male and female within the bond of marriage is honored and protected.⁸ God is dishonored when His design for sexual union is disregarded and perverted, and He will not allow this perversion to go unpunished.⁹ In addition, sexual expression outside the biblical standard corrupts the ideal in human relationships and prevents human flourishing.¹⁰

103-3.3 There is hope in Jesus Christ for the sexual sinner, not only for forgiveness but also for the transformation and redirection of life.¹¹ The battle against improper sexual desires may persist until our weak and fallen bodies are raised anew with Christ, but the present resurrection power of the indwelling Holy Spirit enables the repentant sinner to overcome the controlling influences of sinful fleshly impulses.¹² When a person comes to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, he is freed from sin’s guilt through forgiveness and liberated from sin’s tyrannical power by the Holy Spirit.¹³

103-3.4 We are to approach all sin, including sexual sin in the Church, with humility and sacrificial resolve.¹⁴ We need to recognize and convey that we are all fallen creatures¹⁵ whose present joy and hope lies in the result of Christ’s persistent and tender mercy on our behalf. We need to demonstrate that same mercy with one another as we heal and grow together as rescued sinners into the fullness of Christ. In love, we must also exhort all who profess faith in Christ to obey His commands and pursue His holiness in all facets of their lives. If that appeal is rejected and sexual sin persists without repentance, we must be willing to pursue loving discipline with the hope of restoring the sinner and guarding the life of Christ’s body.¹⁶

¹ Gen. 1:27, 2:24; 1 Cor. 6:19-20.

² Gen. 2:24; Mark 10:6-9 (cf. Deut 6:4); Mal. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 6:14-19; Eph. 5:30-32.

³ Gen 1:27-28; Song of Solomon 7:6.

⁴ Gen 1:27.

⁵ Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:14; Matt. 19:4; Mk. 10:7-8; 1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:31.

⁶ Mal. 2:14.

⁷ 1 Cor. 6:20, 7:2-5.

⁸ Gen. 2:24; 1 Cor. 7:1-5; 1 Cor. 6:9-11, 13, 18-20; Eph. 5:30-32; Heb. 13:4.

⁹ Lev. 18:1-30; Ex. 20:14; Matt. 5:28; Rom. 1:25-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5-6; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; 1 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 13:4; Jude 7; Rev. 21:8, 22:15.

¹⁰ Gen. 19:30-38; 2 Sam. 11:3-12:23; Ps. 51; 2 Sam. 13; Matt. 14:1-12; Mk. 6:14-29.

¹¹ 1 Cor. 6:11.

¹² Gal. 5:16-25; Titus 2:11-14.

¹³ Rom. 8:1,2.

¹⁴ Gal. 6:1.

¹⁵ Rom. 3:9, 23; Prov. 20:9.

¹⁶ Mat. 18:15-17.

Article 154 - Homosexuality (original wording)

154-1 A homosexual is a man or woman who indulges a lust for or engages in sexual acts with a member of the same sex.

154-2 God’s Word declares that the expression of sexual relations is authorized only in the union of male and female within the bond of marriage.¹ Scripture plainly teaches that homosexual lust and practice are sinful in God’s sight.² Regardless of any claim to the contrary, the Bible explicitly declares that homosexuality is a perversion of God’s created order.³

154-3 It would be a violation of the Word of God to admit unrepentant homosexuals into church membership or office because the sin of homosexuality invalidates a Christian profession of faith.⁴ When a Christian yields to homosexual temptation, the Bible requires that fellow believers use the means of church discipline in order to urge the individual to repent and be restored.⁵

154-4 There is hope in Jesus Christ for the homosexual, not only for forgiveness but also for the transformation and redirection of life.⁶ When a person comes to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, he is freed from sin’s guilt through forgiveness and liberated from sin’s tyrannical power by redemption.⁷

¹ Gen. 2:24.

² Lev. 18:22, 20:13.

³ Rom. 1:25-27.

⁴ 1 Cor. 6:9, 10.

⁵ Mat. 18:15-17.

⁶1Cor. 6:11.

⁷Rom. 8:1, 2.

Article 154 – Sexual Immorality (rewrite)

154-1 God’s Word declares that the expression of sexual relations is authorized only in the union of male and female within the bond of marriage.¹ Any sexual act outside this biblical standard is sinful in God’s sight.

154-2 Regardless of any claim to the contrary, the Bible teaches that activities such as adultery, bestiality, fornication, homosexuality (i.e. indulging in a lust for or engaging in a sexual act with a member of the same sex), incest, polygamy, sexual lust and sexual self-gratification are perversions of God’s created order.²

154-3 It is a violation of the Word of God to admit into church membership or office any unrepentant man or woman engaged in sexual immorality because such unrepentance invalidates a Christian profession of faith.³ When a church member yields to sexual immorality, the Bible requires that fellow believers use the means of church discipline in order to urge the individual to repent and be restored.⁴

¹ Gen.2:24.

² Ex. 20:14,17; Lev. 18:6-23; 20:13; Matt. 5:27-28; Matt. 19:4-6; Rom. 1:25-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10, 7:3- 5,9; Heb. 13:4; Rom. 13:13-14.

³ 1 Cor. 6:9-10.

⁴ Mat.18:15-17.

APPENDICES

The following statements are not conclusive nor comprehensive, but represent some of the topics we researched as a committee. Our desire is that the appendices will help begin the discussion among your local elder boards.

APPENDIX A: CIVIL MARRIAGE VS. SACRED MARRIAGE

By Dan Allen

Each BFC-credentialed and ordained minister holds a dual licensing credential with the state in which they reside. Thus, when performing a marriage ceremony, the pastor is also acting on behalf of the state. Although religious freedom has kept the state at bay and, thus, it is doubtful that this will happen in the near future, there may come a day in which all licensed agents of the state will be required to perform marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples. (This is already happening with non-religious agents of the state in states in which same-sex marriage is legal.)

One has to believe that if the Supreme Court of the United States lifts the ban on same-sex marriages before the end of their term in June, 2015, which appears to be an almost certainty, there will be test cases in which same-sex couples will attempt to have ministers who are religious objectors to their life-choice perform their ceremonies. (Cake decorators in several states which have legalized same-sex marriages, as well as at least one private reception venue in upstate New York, were sued in court. All offending entities lost in court).

Our committee discussed the following option for pastors. Perhaps other options could be explored. Opting out of the state licensing. Religious marriage would be performed by the minister, but the couple would have to seek other options to fulfill state requirements: A civil ceremony before a judge, Justice of the Peace or some other agent of the State. This is done in some European countries. Obtain a “Self Unity Certificate,” also known as a “Quaker License” (which is used by some Quakers as well as Amish, but may not be available in all states).

APPENDIX B: CHURCH POLICY AND PRACTICE WITH REGARD TO HOMOSEXUALITY

By Clyde Bomgardner and Tim Zuck

As a particular church seeks to deal with the fact that there will be those who will come to their services of worship who are practicing homosexuality, we offer the following suggestions:

1. With regard to church policy and practice, those who are engaged in homosexual activity should be treated as any other persons engaging in persistent, unrepentant acts of immoral sexual behavior.
2. Because we are the church of Jesus Christ, in remembrance of our Founder, who was made perfect in suffering, we must love them, minister to them, and partner with them in the struggles they are facing as the Spirit groans as He shares in our struggles.
3. Recognizing that those who have, or are engaged in homosexual activity, may have experienced alienation by the Church in the past and/or have been exposed to caricatures of Christian teaching regarding sexual holiness, we ought to express Christ-like empathy toward such persons and seek to clarify Christian teaching about sexual holiness.
4. Because we believe that same-sex intercourse is sin, we believe that those who practice homosexuality, along with those who unrepentantly practice polygamy, adultery, prostitution, or fornication, must be denied membership into a particular church until such time as they are repentant.¹
5. Because God is holy and calls us to be holy, we must call them to a higher standard of behavior and a holier way of thinking. At least, this means that those who do not abstain from same-sex intercourse should not be able to hold church membership or church office.

6. A particular church ought to take to heart Christ's words when dealing with one who practices homosexual behavior and who 'backslides' into homosexual intercourse, taking every opportunity to restore this person to the fellowship of believers.² When persons refuse indefinitely to repent, it is the responsibility of the church to declare them to be wrong and, with sorrow and regret, to administer church discipline for the purpose of restoring them to the fellowship of believers.³ We recommend that a particular church ought to put no impediment in the way for church membership or church office for someone with an homosexual orientation or preference who remains celibate, does not endorse homosexual behavior, and gives every evidence of wanting to remain committed to the Bible's and the church's teaching on homosexuality. As a particular church seeks to communicate the gospel, even to those who practice homosexuality, who cannot meet the minimal standards for church membership and who desire to attend services and meetings, the church ought to show hospitality (e.g. welcoming them as visitors to church meetings, reaching out to them in their homes) just as it would to others who are sinning.⁴
10. Due to cultural acceptance of homosexuality and so-called "gay marriage," which may embolden activists to disrupt worship services by protests and public displays of affection, we strongly encourage each particular church to devise a plan of action to respond wisely to such possible scenarios with grace and truth.

¹ 1 Cor. 6:9-11.

² Luke 17:3-4.

³ 1 Cor. 5:11-13.

⁴ Gagnon, Robert, A.J. *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Nashville, TN, Abingdon Press, 2002) pp. 489-491. This list is adapted from Gagnon's section entitled, "Church and Civil Policy Matters."

APPENDIX C: SEXUAL IDENTITY

By Clyde Bomgardner

God created human beings in His image as male and female.¹ Therefore, every human being's sexual identity (herein understood as gender) has been ordained by God.² As human beings multiplied, God directed husbands and wives to call their children sons or daughters.³

The sexual identity of a man or a woman, though defined by other things, certainly cannot be the opposite of a human being's sexual physiology.⁴ God placed order in human relationships. Yet, God's order of creation of humankind, and the roles and responsibilities and curses He has given to each gender, show that masculinity and femininity are significantly more than just having unique and complimentary sexual physiology.^{5 6}

No human being has the authority to change the gender that God has given.⁷ In the rare case that a human being is born with neither or both male and female sexual organs, this requires prayerful wisdom for the biological and spiritual family to know how to make decisions regarding the sexual identity of this human being created by God.⁸

¹ Gen. 1:27, 5:1-2.

² Ps. 139:13.

³ Gen. 4:1, 5:3-4, 6-8, 9-11ff; Num. 26:28-29, 33; 1 Chron. 14:3; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 1:12-14.

⁴ Gen. 4:1

⁵ Gen. 2:22-24; 3:16, 17-19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:8-12; Eph. 5:21-33; 1 Tim. 2:8-15

⁶ For a more in depth list of masculinity and femininity, read *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), ch. 1, pp 35ff.

⁷ Isa. 46:3-5, 8-10.

⁸ Gen. 5:3; Ps. 127:1,3.

APPENDIX D: SEXUAL HOLINESS

What is Sexual Purity?

By Joshua Miller

The topic of sexual ethics in the life of a believer brings with it a litany of questions regarding what is natural, what is permissible, what is immoral, etc.; and even more foundational questions like what is the purpose and meaning of sex?

With tongue firmly planted in cheek, this list of questions makes me all the more thankful for the first century church in Corinth. As this young church sought to understand what it meant to have "the mind of Christ," (2:16) it didn't take long for questions and misunderstandings to arise regarding the practice and application of the gospel to everyday life. One area of concern and confusion was that of sexual ethics, both inside and outside of marriage. And it will do us well to follow Paul's theological and rational arguments as we seek to apply the gospel to the complicated world of sexual ethics.

First Corinthians 6 and 7 are the epicenter of this exchange between Paul and the Corinthian church concerning the Corinthians' misunderstanding of sex. Paul confronts their perversions regarding sex in four distinct areas; 1) They were abusing their freedom within the New Covenant; 2) They confused functionality with purpose; 3) They misunderstood the future relevance of their physical body; 4) They misunderstood the present relevance of their physical bodies.

In 1 Cor. 6:12-20, Paul confronts them by responding to three different Corinthian slogans that were used in defense of their immoral lifestyle; 1) “All things are lawful for me” (v.12); 2) “Food is meant for the stomach and stomach for food, and God will destroy both one and the other.”(v. 13) 3) “Every sin a man commits is outside the body” (v. 18).¹

They were abusing the freedom found within the new covenant:

Paul’s confrontation begins in verse 12, where he takes on their first argument, “All things are lawful for me.”

It is worth noting that Paul’s confrontation does not begin with their behavior of immorality, but begins with their wrong thinking. He knew their visits to the local brothels grew out of a misapplication of the gospel. Their understanding that they had been delivered from the regulations of the law somehow gave them license to practice sexual immorality.

Paul initially combats this thinking by responding, “but not all things are profitable (helpful).”² This response by Paul confronts their antinomian practice with a higher standard. They are bound, not by the law, but by their responsibility to one another. Their freedom was to be used to serve and love one another nor to gratify the desires of the flesh. “This liberty must be lived out in the spirit of Augustine’s maxim, ‘Love, and do what you will.’”³

Paul then responds to this phrase with a second argument, “but I will not be enslaved by anything.” Again, Paul could have simply stated that adultery and fornication is an abuse of God’s plan for sex but he still doesn’t go there in his argument against immorality. Instead, Paul makes use of a play on words to emphasize his point here. He is in a sense saying, “I will not be enslaved by freedom.” We are not to allow our freedom to control us because we now have another master, the Lord Jesus Christ. Which is where Paul eventually takes the Corinthian believers, “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.” (vv. 19-20)

So Paul responds to the Corinthian argument, “All things are lawful for me,” by reminding them that their freedom is constrained by love for one another and by the Lordship of Christ.⁴

They confused functionality with purpose:

Paul now responds to the fallacious statement, “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food and God will destroy both one and the other.”

The Corinthians were making a very rational argument for their sexual escapades. “It’s natural. Just as food and the stomach are meant for each other so are sexual acts meant for the sexual organs of the body.” Denny Burk summarizes their argument, “Their teleological justification for immorality consisted in the observation that the human body’s design reveals its purpose.”⁵

Paul responds in the second half of verse 13, “The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body.” Our sexual organs, sexual impulses and sexual cravings do not determine a sexual ethic. Our need for release, our pent-up sexual appetite, and our sexual frustration do not justify behavior. Once again, Paul brings us back to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Our bodies were not meant for any sexual act that falls outside the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

They misunderstood the future relevance of their physical body:

In 6:14, Paul responds to the second part of this argument. “Just as God raised the Lord and will raise us up by his power.”

Libertines had . . . used the fact that food did not raise a moral issue to support their contention that sexual conduct also had no moral significance. Paul grants that both food and the stomach belong to the transient sphere . . . But . . . the body is not something transient, but will be raised from the dead.⁶

With this argument we see the remnants of Platonic dualism creeping into the justification for their sin. God must not care much about the body, if he is just going to destroy it. As Ben Witherington observed, “Many Corinthian Christians apparently thought that salvation did not involve the body.”⁷ This belief in the moral irrelevance of the body was a foundational error. The Christian is not waiting for God to destroy his body but to resurrect it. It becomes clear in 1 Corinthians 15:12 that this church had entertained a theological aberration regarding the future resurrection. But here in chapter 6 we see how they were using this aberration to excuse their immorality.

Paul goes on in 6:15-17 to teach that this future resurrection of our body is an indication that we are unified with Christ in the present. When we commit a sexual act we become one flesh with our partner. And thus the Christian’s union with Christ through the Spirit makes the sin all the more grave.

It is at this point that Paul grounds his sexual ethic in this institution of marriage in the garden (v. 16). The union of man and woman in the covenant of marriage is how the body was designed to function. This is the only sexual act that honors the lordship of Christ and so uses the members of our body for his glory. This leads to the fourth error in their thinking. Not only does the body have a future dignity but our union with the Spirit gives our body a present relevance.

They misunderstood the present relevance of their physical body:

With their slogan, “Every sin a person commits is outside the body,” the Corinthians were indicating that the body is morally irrelevant. The body to them was amoral. They certainly acknowledged the presence of sin, but it was not to be fought in the realm of the physical but internally. The body was going to do what the body was going to do, and they were fine with letting it run its course. “This is not to say that the Corinthians denied the possibility of sin. Sin was possible but only on the level of motive and intention, and they refused to concede that these could be evaluated on the basis of the actions in which they were embodied. Hence, ‘every sin which a man may commit is outside the body.’”⁸

Paul responds by telling them that the body has been marked out and set apart for a sacred service, to serve as the Temple of the Holy Spirit. The body is to be used for God's purposes, thus the Christian is not his own but has relinquished all claims to ownership over his body.

Paul closes this discussion in chapter 6 by commanding them to use glorify God with their body. And within the context of Paul's exchange with the Corinthians he means, "Glorify God with your sex."

There are subordinate purposes for sex given to us throughout the Bible; procreation, pleasure, expression of love, and the consummation of marriage. But neither of them must surpass the significance and weight of using our sexuality to glorify God. One does not need to participate in sex to glorify God. And thus to surrender my impulses, my natural inclination, my cravings and my freedom to the lordship of Christ is to glorify God in your body.

Paul could have simply told the Corinthians to stop fornicating, but Paul was more concerned with a worldview that needed to be adjusted. This world is not the end. The true telos of the Christian is not death but eternal life. Our physical bodies are eternally significant because of the resurrection. And our physical makeup and bodily impulses do not determine the purpose for sex. God has delivered the purpose for sex, and that purpose is, to glorify him. With Paul's use of Gen 2:24, which is the clearest and most comprehensive explanation for the design of sex (Mal. 2:14; Matt. 19:4; Mk. 10:7-8; 1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:31), we are given how this act is to be used to glorify God. Using our sexuality to adulterate, fornicate, masturbate, lust after, fantasize, sodomize, seduce, rape, etc. is to fall outside of God's design.

So when one asks, "What is sexual purity?" Paul would recommend that we first take a step back and ask, "Is there a purpose for human sexuality?" Because in finding and understanding the purpose, one will find the standard by which purity is measured. If human sexuality has no ultimate purpose outside of what each individual assigns to it, then there is no point in discussing its purity. In such cases, purity becomes as fluid as its purpose. With no standard, sexual purity becomes measured by how successful I am in using my sexuality to accomplish the purpose I intended for it. With the simple statement, "glorify God with your body" I am no longer left to create my own purpose for sexuality and sexual expression. Thus its purity and purpose are not fluid, and this truth is most offensive to the world.

¹ The first two slogans in this list are almost universally accepted as Corinthian statements (see commentaries by Anthony Thiselton, Gordon Fee, and Leon Morris). The most controversial of these interpretations is the final slogan from 1 Cor. 6:18. For defense of my stance, see Denny Burk, *What is the Meaning of Sex?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), pp. 54-57.

² "The idea of "profitability" comes from the Greek word *sumphero*, a word that appears two other times in this book: 10:23-24 and 12:7. In both instances, the term refers to that which is profitable for the common good of the whole body of Christ.

³ Leon Morris, TNTC: *1 Corinthians*, p. 94.

⁴ "Paul does not deny the statement 'All things are lawful to me' (v.12). He may even had said something like that himself when explaining the believer's freedom from the multiple prohibitions of Jewish Law. What he does is to attach two restrictions which bring it in line with his understanding of Christian community." Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, (Liturgical Press, New Testament Message 10, 1991), p. 52.

⁵ Denny Burk, *What is the Meaning of Sex?*, p. 50.

⁶ Murphy-O'Connor, pp.73-74.

⁷ Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), p. 164n11. Quoted in *The Meaning of Sex* by Denny Burk.

⁸ Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 51.

APPENDIX E: DEFINING SEXUAL PERSONS

By Aaron Susek

1. Basic Position

I am increasing uncomfortable with the notion of defining persons in relation to their sexual desires or activity and am of the opinion we should restrict statements to specific activity, not persons.

1. Reasons

- a. One frank reason is because there are no homosexuals in the body of Christ. It is categorically incorrect to say a homosexual is one who indulges a lust for or engages in sexual activity with a member of the same sex. A fundamental benefit of the gospel is that in union with Christ and His resurrection, we are not defined by our sin or our sinful inclinations, but rather by Christ's exalted status and righteous accomplishments.

So at the very least, it seems to me that if we are going to define persons as we do in 154-1, we should be careful to say something to the effect, Homosexuals within the Church are men and women, dearly loved of the Father, redeemed by the death and resurrection of the Son, assured of eternal grace by the testimony of Christ's Spirit, who wrestle with a lust for and temptation towards sexual acts with members of the same sex.

- b. Definitions can perhaps reinforce a false dichotomy among Christians that homosexuality = bad and heterosexuality = good. In reality, the majority of what falls under heterosexuality in our culture (perhaps even in our churches) is not "good." Using only the labels of homo/heterosexuality seems to leave *135 132nd BFC Conference Human Sexuality and Marriage*

much off heterosexuality off the hook...or at least on a lesser hook. It can allow heterosexuals to stand on a pedestal of moral superiority. In truth, though, heterosexuality holds as many latent moral dangers and as many desires and inclinations to be sacrificed to the Lordship of Christ as does homosexuality. This seems of particular importance given the Church has had a tendency to escalate sexual sins and also struggled to love escalated sinners.

For instance, why do we have no statement with the heading, heterosexuality? Why is there no statement on heterosexual lust being grounds for church discipline or heterosexual lust as perversion?

- c. In the broader culture, sexual definitions involve so much more than just lust and sexual activity. It (unfortunately) encompasses much deeper issues of personal identity. It deals with behaviors, choices, relationships and peer groups, memories, marriage, physical health, fantasy, love and hopes, etc. To have a statement that defines a homosexual simply as one who indulges a lust or engages in certain activity, and defines that person negatively, might be to have a statement that at best is rightly irrelevant to the culture at large and at worst deeply wounding. For instance:
 - i. Through the lens of this broader understanding of sexual identity, homosexuality is at times less a perversion of God's created order, and more a result of the creation's curse (154-2).
 - ii. Again, through this lens, heterosexuality can often invalidate Christian professions as much, if not more so, than homosexuality (154-3).
 - iii. Furthermore, it is increasingly the perspective of sexual theorists that the heterosexual/homosexual classification is an oppressive social construct that need to be deconstructed. So if we kept the same definitions and identities in our statements, it is possible that in the near future, we would have a term neither defined for us by Scripture nor agreed upon by the culture.
- d. The broader culture has given far too much defining power to our sexuality. The culture has bought wholesale into the lie that we are what we desire. The Church should be identity-subversive – living testimonies in a drowning world that our deepest identity lies in what God desires for us and how He has acted on our behalf.
 - i. Are we reinforcing a negative cultural intuition when we define sexual persons? Have we bought into part of that lie ourselves?
 - ii. I also wonder if defining persons hinders our ability to counsel people toward healing, growth, and self-giving in areas of love and sexuality. For instance, could we ever counsel a homosexual to marry a member of the opposite sex? If we (or they, those who are undergoing counseling) resist that, I wonder if that isn't because we've placed too much weight on sexual identity.
 - iii. Lastly, as homosexuality is such a convoluted and even debated term in the culture, labeling a person a homosexual can perhaps unintentionally leave them at the mercy of a whole host of unbiblical truths, explanations, and counsel.

¹Hammon, Michael. "Against Heterosexuality." *First Things*. March 2014

APPENDIX F: SEXUAL SELF-GRATIFICATION

What does the Bible teach about seeking sexual self-gratification?

By Joshua Miller

At the heart of this issue is the question of whether or not sexual self-gratification, in and of itself, can be given a moral valuation. Can sexual self-gratification be good or bad, right or wrong; or is it merely an amoral act with no necessary valuation? For the Christian, this question forces us back to God's design and purpose for sexual gratification.

When one evaluates the texts that deal with the act of sexual union, it is apparent that the goal is not sexual independence but sexual dependence. First Corinthians 7:3-5 and Song of Solomon 2:7, 3:5 and 7:4 all indicate that the delight and passion that is enjoyed in the "coming together" of a man and a woman is to be for their mutual satisfaction and is to be enjoyed in its proper time. By implication, this would mean that sex is to be mutually participated in and that it is possible for it to be practiced at an improper time.

In addition, 1 Corinthians 7:9 offers the proper way to view and to handle one's "burning passion." This burning passion is an indication that God has called you to pursue a spouse and commit yourself to fulfill your role as a husband or wife. This burning passion is motivation to pursue the mutual participation of physical intimacy which can only be properly enjoyed within the covenant of marriage.

Finally, sexual lust and fantasizing are often an integral part of this self-gratification, and the Word of God strictly forbids the practice of sexual lust.

In conclusion, sexual self-gratification is a rejection of God's intention of using our burning passion to drive us to dependence upon another, and instead making us sexually independent in regard to satisfying this burning passion.

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Study Committee on Human Sexuality & Marriage: Daniel P. Allen, Chairman; Joshua P. Miller, Secretary; Clyde D. Bomgardner, Jordan K. Eyster, John Hanner, Aaron J. Susek, Timothy M. Zuck.

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