

HOPE CHURCH

Policy on Marriage and Human Sexuality

Hope Church embraces the truth that people are created in the Image of God and matter to God — all people of all backgrounds, ethnicities, socio-economic levels, and sexual orientations.

Our desire is that our Hope Church community would be a safe place for every person to embrace the transforming work of the gospel, experience the life-giving ministry of the Holy Spirit, and compassionately engage in mission toward lost, needy, and broken people.

We encourage everyone at Hope Church to pursue this life-giving journey of following Christ, including living out the teachings of Scripture in the areas of marriage and human sexuality.

We believe that abiding by these principles results in greater freedom, joy, and personal satisfaction in our lives and our sexuality. We understand that many of us have experienced some level of brokenness in our sexuality.

However, we are committed to pursuing God's Will in this area as directed by His Word. This statement is an expression of our heart and core beliefs regarding these matters, including practical implications for life and ministry at Hope Church.

Our Core Beliefs...

Marriage and Sexual Intimacy:

We believe that sexuality is a God-given gift and blessing to be celebrated and enjoyed within the context of marriage. We believe that God established marriage as the uniting of one man and one woman in a permanent, exclusive, loving, covenantal union, reflecting God's covenant relationship with us as His people (Genesis 2:18-25; Ephesians 5:21-33).

We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other, and that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in, outside of this marriage relationship (1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4, I Thessalonians 4:3-8).

Singleness and Sexuality:

For those who are single and seeking to follow Christ, we believe the Bible teaches that sexual intimacy outside of marriage is not God's will nor God's best for us.

While we recognize the very real struggle of living a sexually pure life in our society

Adopted by Elder Board of Hope: April 12, 2017

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today, we urge singles to pursue holiness in this area, trusting God's help and provision (Hebrews 4:14-16). We encourage singles to cultivate healthy, deepening relationships as an essential aspect of a growing spiritual life.

Sexual Purity and Temptation:

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including premarital sex, homosexual and bisexual conduct, adultery, as well as the use of pornography) is not consistent with God's heart and design for sexual expression.

While it is not a sin to be tempted in these areas, participating in such activities is sinful (1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 4:15). We encourage individuals to embrace sexual purity as a choice and a lifestyle (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, Matthew 15:18-20; James 4:17).

Practical Implications for Church Life and Ministry...

Marriage Ceremonies:

Given our church's Biblical understanding of the sacredness of marriage, the pastors, staff, and ministry leaders of Hope Church will only solemnize marriages between one biological man and one biological woman, regardless of the ceremony location.

The facilities and properties of Hope Church shall only host weddings between one biological man and one biological woman.

Couples who desire someone other than a Hope Church pastor to perform their marriage ceremony at any Hope Church facility need prior approval by the Staff Team.

The Role of God's Word and the Elders of Hope Church:

This statement does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs or response to practical issues related to marriage, gender, and human sexuality at Hope Church.

The Bible is our final authority. As communicated in our denominational Statement of Faith, *"We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises."* (EFCA Statement of Faith | Article 2 | Adopted in 2008)

Should any questions of interpretation and application arise, our Bylaws state that the Board of Elders is the final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application for Hope Church.