

SMCC's Position on Human Sexuality

Introduction

SMCC is a church that is committed to grace and truth. The reason for this commitment is our desire to follow Christ's example in how we communicate. In John's Gospel we read that He came into our world *full of grace and truth* (John 1:14). Therefore, it is our intention to promote grace and truth in how we interact with those who disagree with us on important and difficult matters of church life such as human sexuality. On one hand, we accept people without prejudice, no matter how they choose to identify in terms of gender or how they behave sexually (this is an expression of GRACE). At the same time, we do not feel it necessary to approve of their choices or how they live (this is an expression of TRUTH). There are no standards of behavior for the person who would like to attend SMCC, but there are expectations for those who serve in particular roles at SMCC (leadership roles, teaching roles, and some other roles of influence). Simply put, we do not denounce people or groups of people. We do not treat anyone with prejudice simply because of their association with a group or lifestyle. We seek to lift up and help all people, treating them with dignity and respect whether they agree with us or not.

Statement

The purpose of this position paper is to help explain what we believe to be the Biblical understanding of various expressions of human sexuality. Simply put, we believe that the Bible teaches a very clear and wise approach to how human sexuality is to be expressed. We believe sex is to be practiced within the covenant of marriage, defined by the "one flesh" union of one man and one woman in a life-long covenant before God (Matthew 19:4-5 & Mark 10:6-9). The Bible often uses the imagery of a wedding and a covenant marriage as a metaphor to teach spiritual truth (Matthew 22:2; Revelation 19:9) about Christ (The Bridegroom) and the Church (The Bride of Christ). God takes marriage very seriously, partly because he wants us to understand the importance of being faithful to the one (Christ) who was faithful to us.

This simple, yet clear guidance from scripture, rules out pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex, sexual behavior that doesn't involve one's spouse (pornography), same-sex (homosexual) sexual practices, rape, incest, polygamy, and all other expressions of sexual immorality (porneia) (Galatians 5:19). We also believe that the person who gets a divorce for reasons other than those justified in Scripture is committing adultery (Please see SMCC's Position Paper on Divorce and Remarriage under Resources at www.smccutah.org); and therefore, sex outside of marriage. We want to be clear here; ALL forms of sexual immorality are sinful, and are therefore, outside of God's design for us.

Answers To Questions

Question: What about those that are same sex attracted?

Answer: We would not describe "attraction" as sinful. We understand that temptation and behavior are two very different things (James 1:12-15). Even if a person identifies as gay, referring to their attraction, and yet hold to a traditional sexual ethic by living celibate, they have not sinned. This doesn't mean that we would not like to see them get helpful and hopeful

counsel as to how to navigate through what they feel. We think that these thoughts and feelings do not correspond to nature, but at the same time, do not disqualify a person for service in the Kingdom.

Question: What about the person who identifies as gay or lesbian?

Answer #1: We understand that all sorts of qualifiers are used to identify ourselves to others (race, occupation, nationality, hobby, et cetera). Some forms of identity we are born into and some we choose. None of them is more central to who we are than our identity as a Christ follower. This identity is ultimate and shapes us more than any other identity. Therefore, when someone says that they “identify as gay or lesbian” we accept that declaration at face value. But we also want to help that person take their next step in becoming fully devoted and fully delighted in Jesus Christ - finding their greatest sense of identity IN HIM.

Answer #2: The way a person identifies or the way they describe their sexual orientation should be evaluated in light of what the Bible says regarding human sexuality. We believe that accepting “same sex attraction” as normative will not lead to the fullness of joy that Christ promised.

Answer #3: We believe that God created two distinct genders and made each of them in his image, equipping them for complementary service in governing his creation and for sexual union (Gen. 1:26-28). In so doing He established a clear plan and mechanism for the biological and social flourishing of his creatures from generation to generation.

Question: What if the sex within my marriage is not consensual?

Answer: According to 1 Corinthians 7:2-5 a husband or wife has a responsibility to their spouse to make themselves available for sex. There is no other guidelines other than wisdom for how frequent this “availability” needs to be. But each should have the other’s needs and desires in mind and which to love them appropriately through intimacy. There are all sorts of reasons why this might not be possible, but as a general rule, sex in marriage is a good thing. Having said this, it is also unbiblical for a spouse to force their marriage partner to do anything. In Hebrews 13:4 we are told to make sure that the marriage bed is “undefiled.” There are many applications to this command but certainly one of them is to not force sex on an unwilling partner.

Question: Does sex with the person you intend on marrying violate what SMCC believes to be the standard of no sex outside of marriage?

Answer: Yes. We know that people can make a pledge to get married and feel like they are therefore committed to each other, but we believe that a “covenant of marriage” is formalized by public promises made to God, each other, the family, and the church. Sex outside of “covenant marriage” is therefore to be avoided.

Conclusion

We believe that all people, regardless of past sexual practices, are in need of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Further, we believe that all improper sexual activity can be forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ and what He accomplished for us on the Cross. We believe that any ultimate change in the human condition comes through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. When the Gospel is believed and reinforced through the process of discipleship, change is possible.

We believe that all people should be taught, guided, encouraged and loved toward living a life that is free from the bonds of sin.

We believe that God may call some people to live lives of singlehood and celibacy for his glory. If this is the case, we believe that He will enable them to serve Him while they remain sexually pure. This is equally true for heterosexuals and same sex attracted individuals (those who never develop feelings or attraction for the opposite sex).

For virtually all of church history, the people of God have believed the statements above. This is still the case for the vast majority of Christians around the world today. We invite anyone to dialogue with us if you have a more informed or more accurate understanding of how the above scripture should be interpreted.