

Human Sexuality
The Session of Windwood Presbyterian Church

Why are we writing this?

The debate on the social boundaries of human sexuality has been part of popular culture for decades; and because Christians do not live in a social vacuum, we've brought this discussion into our churches. In the PC(USA), we've been struggling with this for the last 25 years, and its current momentum is pushing our denomination away from the Biblical standard. To ease any confusion, Windwood's Session presents our understanding of God's Word on the gift of sexuality and its intended place in the Christian's life.

Is sex a sin?

Sexuality is a gift, a good thing in the right circumstances. But even good things can become bad if done in the wrong way, the wrong time, or the wrong place. The Bible tells us God intends for a man and woman to become one flesh in a unique and lifelong intimate companionship called marriage. Within this context, sex is a pleasurable way to encourage trust, vulnerability, and intimacy as a part of this union. A husband and wife naked, both emotionally and physically, without shame in an unconditional loving relationship is a wonderful expression of the covenant of marriage. And through this union God allows us to participate in the creation of children – the living, breathing reflections of the love between a husband and wife.

When *is* sex a sin?

Sex outside of the man/woman marriage covenant falls short of the glory of God. It *misses the mark* (the literal meaning of the Greek word for sin). The Bible lists some specific examples of sexual sin, including fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and bestiality. This is not an exclusive list, however. Any sexual behavior not covered within the covenant of man/woman marriage is sin.

What is expected of Windwood's members, staff, and ordained leaders?

God calls us as Christians to be obedient to His laws because they are for our benefit. We do not break God's laws, but rather break ourselves *on* God's laws. Therefore, Windwood expects all members, staff, and ordained leaders to strive to live within the bounds of fidelity in marriage between a man and woman or chastity in singleness. We do not expect perfection from anyone. We are all sinners and in need of God's Grace. But we cannot, as a Church, expect less of ourselves than God expects of us. To do less would be to proclaim that God is wrong; to call something God names a sin, *not* a sin.

What is the “not a sin” argument?

There are some who proclaim that homosexual behavior is not a sin; therefore, it should be accepted, affirmed, and celebrated as a blessing from God. The Scriptures are clear – this is contrary to God’s law. (I Corinthians 6:9-10) Sexuality is a behavior, not a state of being, just as are our choices of the words we speak, the actions we take involving others, and the stuff we bring into our bodies and hearts. While each of us may struggle with a sinful behavior and fall, we cannot redefine that behavior as something that is good, right, and acceptable – a gift from God – to get ourselves off the hook.

Human behavior is not genetically determined or we would be nothing more than biological robots. Instead, human behavior is a complex combination of influence, desires, experiences and choice. We are born with many kinds of inclinations that do not predetermine (although they may predispose) us to act in a certain way. If an officer issues someone a DUI, does the driver get out of the ticket by stating “I can’t help it; it’s in my DNA to drink and drive”? If someone cheats on their spouse, is this action excused if they proclaim that it was God who made their bodies to desire more than one partner?

Check out www.oneby1.org for stories of men and women who, with the help of God and the support of other Christians, have left the homosexual lifestyle.

How does Windwood discipline sin within its membership?

The purpose of discipline is not punishment, but restoration. Therefore, in love we must tell them the truth from God’s Word. Following Jesus’ instructions from Matthew 18:15 – 17, we are called to try to help bring that person to repentance. Failing that, Jesus tells us to treat them as people who are outside God’s kingdom (where He reigns as King and His law is law); people such as Gentiles and tax collectors. What was Jesus’ attitude toward Gentiles and tax collectors? He died for them -- not so they could have a free ticket for overturning or ignoring God’s law, but to offer them God’s grace.

While someone’s place in the body of Christ – the Church universal – can only be determined by God, their membership at Windwood is based on what we consider to be the commandments of Scripture. Just as membership at Windwood requires an individual to believe that Jesus is the only way to God and that His resurrection is *not* a fiction, it also requires belief in fidelity within a marriage between a man and woman or chastity in singleness.

What about a person who wants to join Windwood as a member but is living in a non-Biblically sanctioned relationship?

The Session examines individuals before receiving them into membership. If a person who is a self-avowed, practicing, unrepentant sinner wishes to join Windwood, the Session would have to tell them their lifestyle violates one of the commandments of our faith. This would exclude them from membership, *but not from our company*. We

would encourage them to keep attending, participating, and learning from God's Word. Should they find themselves repentant and no longer practicing or self-avowed, we would then welcome them into membership to join all of us who struggle with temptation, who seek God's forgiveness and each other's support to live lives of faithful response to His grace.

How should we treat non-members who are in a non-Biblically sanctioned relationship?

Treat them with the same respect and compassion due each and every person, for we are all made in the image of God. But we must tell them the truth in love and trust the Holy Spirit to be at work in their lives to the glory of God. Telling someone their behavior is not sinful when it is, is not loving. People can change if they know change is needed and if we just give them the chance. (I John 1:9-10)

Approved by Session – July 2010