

## **Alive Ministries' Position Statement on Human Sexuality**

### **Purpose:**

*The council of Alive has written the following statement in attempt to bring clarity and a common grounding to all our care and discipleship, and also to provide an explanation of where we stand on various issues of sexuality and culture that we are frequently asked about.*

### **God's Design for Sexuality and Intimacy**

We believe that God created both men and women in his image (Gen. 1:27) and that both genders were designed to reflect the nature, actions and characteristics of God in unique and complimentary ways (Gen. 2:18). One facet of that reflection of God's image is our human desire and capacity for intimacy. The members of the triune godhead--Father, Son and Holy Spirit--live in a relationship of unconditional love, trust, vulnerability, and absence of shame. And God has designed human beings to experience this sort of relational intimacy both with Him and with others. The ultimate human expression of love and intimacy is the joining of a man and a woman in marriage, an event in which the "two become one" (Gen. 2:24, Eph. 5:32, 1 Cor. 6:16) through a sacred covenant of commitment to each other. Sexual union is a gift of physical intimacy that God designed to be enjoyed within the safety and strength of this commitment.

### **Sexual Immorality**

As a result of The Fall, mankind now falls short of God's perfect design for us with regards to physical intimacy. Sin and shame drive a wedge between our relationship with God and other people, and we often resort to finding intimacy in inappropriate and harmful ways, disregarding the safe boundaries that God has given us for sexual union. When sexual intimacy occurs outside the boundaries of a loving marriage covenant between a man and a woman, contrary to God's will and design, it is considered by Scripture to be "sexual immorality". Some sexually immoral practices that are common in our culture include the following: adultery, fornication (sex outside of the marriage relationship), homosexual practice, orgies, incest, acts of sexual abuse, and the use of pornography. Although some of these practices are now quite widely condoned in our culture, the Bible makes it clear that they are not acceptable to God as a part of a holy, God-honoring life. In fact, Jesus made it clear that sexual purity is not just about outward behavior, but also must be the standard for one's thought life, when he states in Matt. 5:28 that even if a man "looks at a woman (that is not his wife) lustfully", he is committing adultery in his heart. By these standards, the struggle to refrain from sexual immorality is a difficult one, requiring all Christians to rely heavily on the redemptive and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit as they endeavor to lead a holy life. Recognizing this, we seek to come alongside those who are struggling with sexual sin with humility, compassion and grace.

### **Broken Sexual Identity**

We recognize that sexual brokenness often goes deeper than the level of conscious action or thought to impact a person's identity. Many embrace identities that are in conflict with God's desire for them as His image bearers. Research has shown that we do not know what causes people to experience same-sex attractions or a homosexual orientation but that there most likely are multiple causes. Abuse, neglect or negative stereotyping throughout someone's life can all do great damage to a person's sense of sexual identity. Cultures often have embedded within them rigid stereotypes of masculinity and femininity that hurt those who embrace them and cause others who don't "fit the mold" to explore other possible options for sexual identity and expression. Our culture encourages people at a young age to question their sexual identity and determine it based on an exploration of the different sexual desires they experience. If those desires are not completely directed towards people of the opposite gender, they are encouraged to identify themselves as homosexual, bi-sexual or sexually "questioning". These words of description regarding one's sexual attraction can end up becoming identity-forming labels, with "scripts"<sup>1</sup> for behavior attached to them by our culture.

---

<sup>1</sup> Yarhouse, Mark A., Homosexuality and the Christian, Bethany House Pub., pg. 48

Besides these social factors, there are some people who also experience biological and neurological factors that cause gender dysphoria. These factors lead a person to feel that they don't identify with the gender they were born with, and then sometimes show that incongruence with their gender through their dress and behavior (or in more extreme cases, through surgical procedures to change their physical makeup).

### **The Church's Role—Redeemed Identity, Restored Intimacy**

As God's Church, we don't believe that one's sexuality is the main determiner for defining his or her identity. Instead we joyfully affirm the Scriptural truth that each person can find their right and gloriously-designed identities only through relationship with Jesus Christ. We believe that the Church is not called to celebrate or affirm someone in any identity that doesn't align itself with identity in Christ, but to help people know Christ and find themselves in Him, being formed by the truth of His Living Word. We believe that Christ's death on the cross offers to all people forgiveness of sin, removal of shame and restoration of broken intimacy with God and each other.

Since identity guides behavior, we believe that the Church should follow the Pauline model of guiding people into a deeper understanding of who they are in Christ and what His powerful work on the cross has accomplished for them. Then they can walk in victory over sin in wholeness, righteousness and intimate relationship with God. Because we are not the owners of our sexuality, but stewards of it, we are therefore called to teach that the body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for God, and God for the body (1 Corinthians 6:12). We are to exhort the church that as Christians, our bodies are "temples of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19) and therefore we are to be good stewards of them, looking toward a trustworthy guide – Scripture and the work of the Spirit. Although we are strongly influenced by our culture and our sinful nature to identify with and practice the aforementioned distortions of God's intentions for our sexuality, through Christ we are "washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). We are to model grateful and passionate pursuit of the goal of laying aside the works of our "old nature" and leaning into the "new creation" Christ has made us through His transforming and redemptive power.

In order to strengthen this new identity, we use the Word of God to support, strengthen, reprove, correct, encourage and train each member in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16). We seek not to "cast stones" (John 8:7-11) of judgment towards any particular sin, but to struggle alongside each other with humility and compassion, helping each other to "go and sin no more" (:11) in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that we can all grow together in the love, power, wholeness and healing of Jesus Christ.