

Homosexuality

INTRODUCTION

Experience suggests that this document, like anything we write or say on this emotionally invested topic, even if written and read with the best intentions, may very well cause as much misunderstanding as it does bring clarity. In light of this, our recommendation for anyone investigating Parkland Fellowship is that you make getting to know Jesus your first priority. Knowing Jesus is, after all, far more important than knowing where Parkland Fellowship stands on any one issue. We invite anyone investigating our church community to get to know *us*, not just our theological positions on controversial matters. We want to get to know *you*, and not just your current collection of beliefs.

BELIEFS

1. We believe that all people, regardless of sexual orientation or identity, are equally and infinitely loved by God.
2. We believe that our human sexuality is a gift from God, although most people may struggle with some degree of brokenness in this area, whether gay or straight.
3. We believe that Christ-followers are called to express their sexuality within marriage.
4. We believe that Jesus calls us back to the Garden, which includes a concept of nakedness without shame within the context of a union between a man and a woman. This male-female love union, we believe, is the Bible's understanding of "marriage."
5. We believe that many people who follow Jesus, gay and straight, may be called to a life of celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom and that we should celebrate this chosen singleness as a gift we offer God and others.
6. We believe that there should be no "us" and "them" between people whose orientation is heterosexual and homosexual. We are all sexually challenged in a variety of ways.
7. We believe that the issue of whether people can be born with a homosexual orientation or their orientation is caused by early childhood experiences is not a worthwhile fixation. How someone becomes "homosexual" (nature or nurture) is a fascinating topic, but it should not be determinative regarding our ethics as Christ followers.

8. We believe that all people who want to at least investigate the teachings of Jesus should be welcomed at Parkland Fellowship and we invite all spiritual seekers to be a part of our church community.
9. We believe that the most important issue of orientation is not our *sexual* orientation but our *spiritual* orientation. We believe that God calls us into a relationship in which we are fundamentally oriented *toward* him rather than *away* from him. We see religious rules, regulations, rituals, and restrictions as humanity's way of trying to keep people 'in line' who may or may not want to be and that this approach to God promotes a legalistic "loophole mentality" – always looking for the way out of our ethic responsibilities rather than actively going the second mile in love. Jesus calls us to a new orientation. He calls us away from a legalistic "outside-in" life and invites us to participate in the "*inside-out*" life of following him.

BOTTOM LINE

Lastly, we believe that believing all of the above will make our community diverse, messy, and beautiful. We do not expect to experience the luxury of uniformity, but we do anticipate experiencing the grace of loving fellowship. We invite you to join us.

SOME RELEVANT BIBLE TEXTS

- **Matthew 5-7** (The Sermon on the Mount)
- **Matthew 19** (Marriage in the Garden & Singleness for the Kingdom)
- **1 Corinthians 7** (The Gifts of Marriage & Singleness)
- **Romans 3:23-24** (Our shared Status as Broken People)
- **Titus 3:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 Peter 3:15-16** (Our Attitude of Grace, Gentleness, & Respect)
- **Philippians 3:13-14** (Freedom from the Pains of Our Past)
- **1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17** (Becoming Our True Selves)
- **1 John 4:7-21** (The Priority of Love)

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